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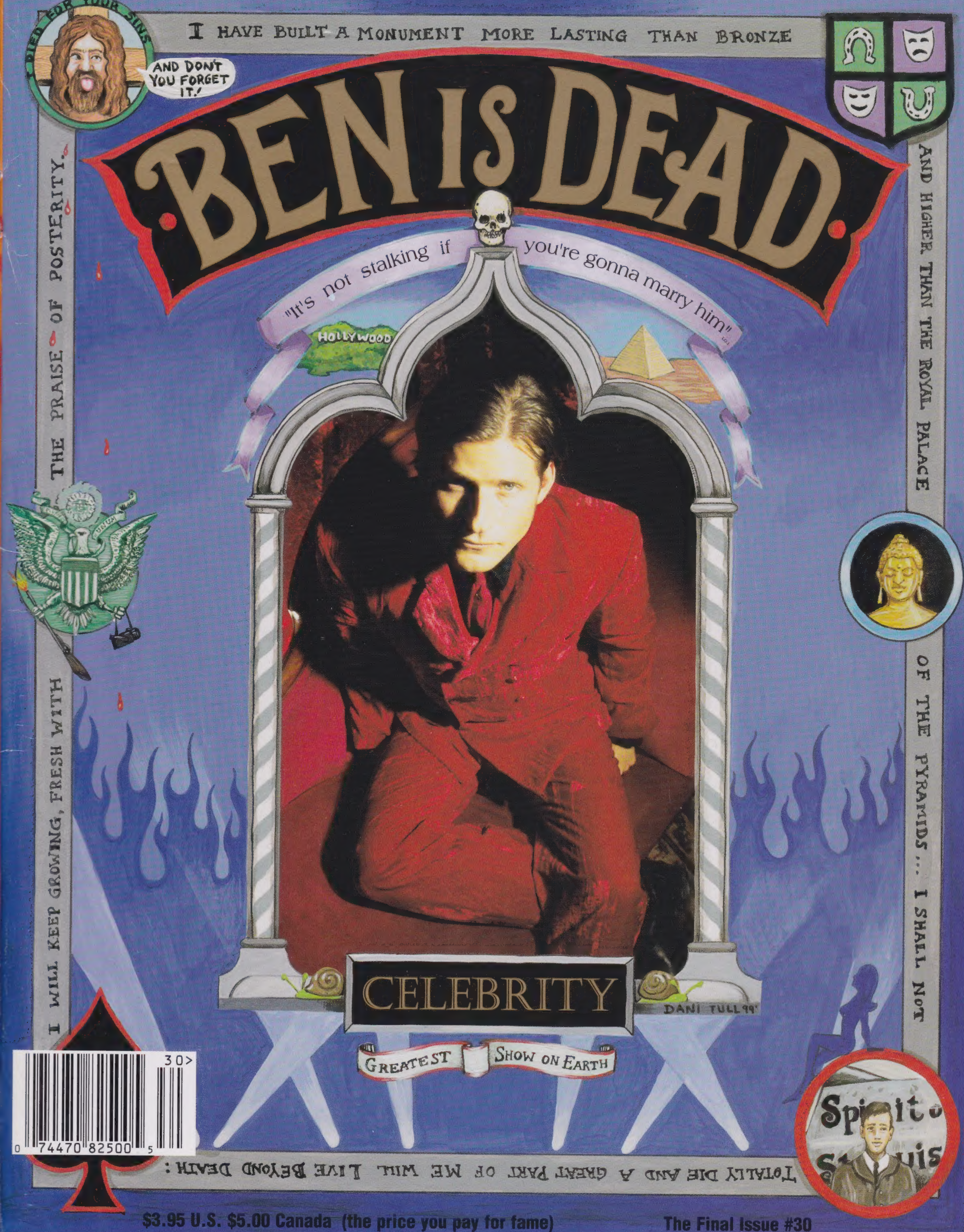
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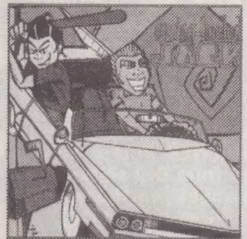

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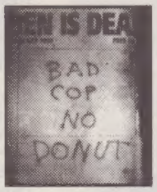
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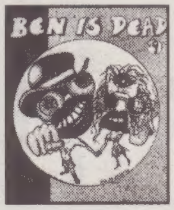
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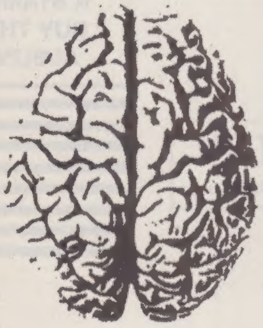

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Subscriptions: to *Ben Is Dead Magazine* are NO LONGER AVAILABLE! THIS IS THE LAST ISSUE!!! If you have a sub we will put it towards ***etta's Notebooks*** (exploration = literal & literary). There are no new subscriptions available. Look for *Notebooks* on the stands or get it directly from our distributors of the *Ben Is Dead* back issues. Back issues of *Ben Is Dead* are now available exclusively at **Koma Books** [formerly Amok Books] in Los Angeles (1764 N. Vermont in Los Feliz, 323/665-0956) or from **Essential Media Mailorder** (www.essentialmedia.com or 800/490-5350). See ad pg 4.

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⑨ saved our butts by fullfilling the prime directive of THE TIMELINE TO FAME. **page 25** We pull Jeff Fox away from the tits, booze, & macho to take a rail car down memory lane with his GRANDPOP. **page 29** Winona Ryder's dad MICHAEL HOROWITZ is a real down-to-earth guy who is famous in his own right. Here he talks with Karen Eng - and for the first time to the
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③ a fan get a little too close. **page 102** Lisa AA *is* just a normal girl. Known around these parts as the young lass who brings her knitting to the OzzFest. And now this! Oy vey! **page 103** If there's someone in Los Angeles that deserves to be famous by now it's MS. VAGINAL DAVIS. The editor prefers not to believe Vag's tell-all because she's so damn naïve and *likes* the Hollywood facade,
② but perhaps "truth is stranger than fiction" could make sense in this case (yikes!). **page 106** JOE MAYNARD gets all scratchy and itchy (and we finally respond to his many efforts to contribute - patient guy). **page 110** Record Reviews & more. **page 116** DAD gets to speak out one final time (politics get so dated in zines...but luckily dad's so far advanced. **page 118** DAVID CASSIDY
① fans freak that they haven't gotten their issue yet and are scared the interview will be DATED! Imagine that! (We're only printing it because they ordered so many copies.) **page 121** Show reviews. **page 125** Darby's Nasty Little Night Out.
and then, with a slight hangover and sigh of relief,
the party's over . . . .

The best fame is a writer's fame: It's enough to get a table at a good restaurant, but not enough that you get interrupted when you eat. –Fran Lebowitz

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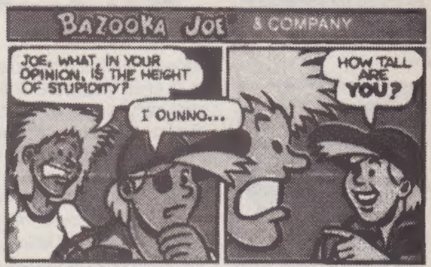
EDITORIAL

by darby


BAZOOKA JOE & COMPANY
JOE, WHAT, IN YOUR OPINION, IS THE HEIGHT OF STUPIDITY?
I DUNNO...
HOW TALL ARE YOU?

FORTUNE: YOUR SUCCESS IS ONLY LIMITED BY YOUR DESIRE

> **...O highest ones, if you see the deeds of mortals, may I be remembered (nothing more does my tongue want to pray) and may I have my story told through long ages what time you have taken from my life, give to my fame.**
> **– Ovid, *Metamorphoses***

Celebrity is a mask that eats into the face. As soon as one is aware of being "somebody," to be watched and listened to with extra interest, input ceases, and the performer goes blind and deaf in his over-animation. One can either see or be seen. –John Updike

* * * * *

For each issue we did of *Ben Is Dead*, contributors complained about the theme, taking it too literally or just frustrated that it hinted at something unhip (when more likely it hinted at their lack of imagination). When I asked my writers to contribute on the "Celebrity" theme, most guffawed. As if they had nothing to contribute because, well, they weren't really interested in "celebrity" or "fame" (differentiating the meaning of these two words was also up for analysis), for themselves or as a concept. That either they didn't aspire to be "one of them," or it was even below them to discuss something so trivial. And for the final issue of *Ben Is Dead*, to tackle something so meaningless! Had all this pop culture really set in? Was it now the only focus and aspiration of a once so cutting-edge magazine? There seems to be a limited scope that Fame is supposed to necessarily be about modern-era movie stars, or even popular artists, writers, sports stars, politicians, talk-show hosts...but when the topic was conceived I was thinking primal desires. You don't have to like or subscribe to the mainstream to find yourself caught up in the desire for acclaim of some sort for your efforts. For your peers' judgment about your accomplishments. Of leaving some piece of yourself on this planet before you eventually leave it.

* * * * *

"The truth of the matter is, if you go back to the primates, you see that there were always alpha males who all the rest of us had to groom and flatter and give all our attention to. If we didn't pay attention to these early 'celebrities,' we wouldn't get food and we wouldn't get protection. Now here we are in the '90s with an elaboration of that early survival system and though the celebrities are no longer responsible for keeping us safe or well fed, we still seem to be programmed to need them in our lives."

–Media psychologist Stuart Fischoff, LA Times, *Feb. 24, 1999*

* * * * *

...fame had collapsed almost entirely into self-regard, and the ancient belief that fame was the crown of achievement had been replaced by the conviction that it was the only thing worthwhile at all.

–Leo Braudy, The Frenzy of Renown

* * * * *

Who deserves fame?

* * * * *

TODAY FAME is more transitory – or so it seems. Someone can be famous for a minute – or a few good years as a Monica Lewinsky – and become more famous than the most deservedly famous people of the past could have become in a lifetime. This is due to technology.* Due to a larger population. Due to an altered set of standards for recognition. Maybe there's not enough room for all the most recent famous people to last more than a few trendy years. Like who's going to remember Ben Affleck 30 years from now? But then, in every time period, there were countless who peaked in fame while they were alive but are completely forgotten today. Someone has become famous in every culture and subculture. With the incessant recording of those who experienced fame being more pronounced in the last very well-documented and archived century, one must wonder how many people can be remembered for being important? Infinitudes? And then we must question the need for these people to be remembered. Was what they did really so important? Or did they make a meager effort that was captured in the right place at the right time – and now it's time to let them go to make room for more important people to be thought about? As in life, the famous dead must progress. They must still mean something to us today to remain.**

* * * * *

*"Edison maintained his remarkable half-century reign as an American hero by a judicious combination of real accomplishment and the tantalizing promise of even more amazing inventions around the corner. A credulous press and public came to believe that Edison's fantasies were more real than any other man's working invention; the inventor of a motion picture projector agreed to market his machine under Edison's name when he was persuaded that no one would want his product because buyers were waiting for Edison to come out with his own."****

* * * * *

A QUICKIE REVIEW OF THE MOVIE *CELEBRITY*:
Kenneth Branagh was trying to be Woody, then he wasn't. He didn't know what his character was to be from scene to scene. The only thing he made believable was that he could act as gross as Woody Allen is. And in 1998, who wants – or let's put it this way, who, as in a girl especially, is attracted to – Woody Allen, or someone acting as Woody Allen? The only celebrity that makes any sense in the scheme of Allen's pedophilia scandal is Howard Stern****, who is among the few "celebrities" to publicly show his disgust (with precise Yiddish put-downs). Woody must stop now. It's over. The documentary of his band was good; maybe it's his sister's turn (she directed it). Maybe he should just be a comedian – or can he do anything more with that whiny style. Maybe the best thing would be a Woody-cam. Woody live on the Web, 24 hours. Welcome to the New New World Order. Celebs have such respect for this man, that even in his pathetic state they desire to be a part of his filmography. They keep him alive, and he can still make his movies 'cause he can still get all the pretty boys and girls. And the pretty boy and girl actors can say how amazing Woody is, even when his movies

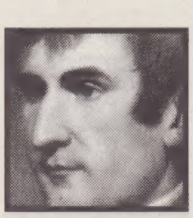
---

* Though in the end, might it be the Web (and 10,000 satellite channels) – where everyone has a chance at fame – that ultimately destroys the cloak of eminence?

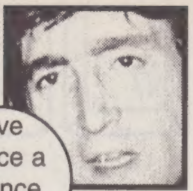
** Even Darwin is struggling in this department, with his work being nixed from biology books all across the country in favor of retro-Creationism. Can you imagine: evolution kills the theory of evolution. Makes sense. Maybe someday *he* can make a comeback.

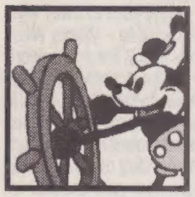
*** From an unrecalled book whcih discussed how Edison didn't actually invent a number of his "inventions."

**** The superhero of exploiting and encouraging the degradation of fame.



It took me fifteen years to discover that I had no talent for writing, but I couldn't give it up because by that time I was too famous. –Robert Benchley (1889-1945)


give peace a chance Julian!



are crap. But this is celebrity at its finest indulgence. If these stars really had respect for the man, they would save him from his embarrassing fame. Genius turned vanity project. And the ads for Woody's films represent Woody's last few years of movie-making perfectly: it's a list of who's who that will be making a cameo appearance on screen. When a man starts making movies with as many famous people as possible – as many cameos as he can get – and he does it so consistently, you have to assume this is taking up the slack for something lacking. In the case of Allen or Altman there's not much assuming needed, it's pretty straightforward.

* * * * *

There is viciousness against celebs and their problems. It is necessary for people to destroy their idols – it's part of the process. If the man or woman or even child allows themselves to become too popular, they have to know the possibilities. If they can't live up to what the world deems of them, then essentially they lied, were phony, weak, and presented a false image. Image is everything. If they can't sustain the image, whether it IS real or not, then they are a fraud. And the twist is the public now becomes the god who must feed upon the soul of the celebrity (the human sacrifice), as opposed to the celebrity being the god who feeds off society's love and attention.

* * * * *

There are two kinds of people in the world: one that recognizes celebrities, and one that doesn't. My friend was quick to mention there are also those who think they recognize a celebrity but are always wrong.

* * * * *

"He looks at me hard. 'I have no doubt you could go to town on a story like that Joyce,' he says. 'Observers like us, we don't miss much. You'd get all kinds of hugely gratifying pats on the back while you were at it, too, as some kind of goddamn female Truman Capote, hopping from one hollow scene to the next. But one day, kiddo, you're going to have to ask yourself what the point would be. Does anybody actually need to open up Esquire magazine and take in one more hysterically amusing little exercise in assassination by typewriter? Sooner or later you need to soberly consider whether what you write is serving any purpose but to serve your own ego.'"

–J.D. Salinger speaking to Joyce Maynard, from her autobiographical book At Home in the World

* * * * *

The Price of Fame

* * * * *

Lewis was leading a very heady life. At 33, he was the most celebrated man in Philadelphia, a city world-renowned for its celebrated men. He was the protége of the president. Balls and testimonials were held in his honor, the biggest in the nation's capital. He had been generously rewarded by Congress, praised by the leading scientists of the day, appointed governor of the biggest territory of the United States, and was the center of attention wherever he went. His prospects could hardly have been better. It was, perhaps, too much success too early in life. There were, perhaps, too many balls with too many toasts.

–Undaunted Courage, Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson and the Opening of the American West by Stephen E. Ambrose

* * * * *

"If I can't steal, I don't want to be famous."

–Pecker's kleptomaniac best friend in John Waters's movie Pecker.

* * * * *

When I see things for sale I think, "Oh, only that much money?" It might be clothing, a car, even a house. And I have a trick, which is I consider the idea that I already own the thing, and if I could sell it for as much as they're selling it for, would I be happy to get the money? It usually distracts me from the original wanting because in almost every case I think, yeah, if I had that and I could sell it I would! (Please, disregard logic for a moment.) And I must ask, to all those who dream of fame, What are you willing to give up for it? And if you had it, that attention, everyone knowing your face, not being able to walk incognito down the street anymore, have a private romance or conversation without the fear never-ending that it might be turned into public consumption… The celebs are paid a lot for good reason. The money they get is in direct proportion to the intrusion upon their lives. But then they have to go and use the money to try and buy their freedom back. And it's a different kind of freedom. It comes in the form of protecting themselves from the celebrity they've attained, from the very fans that made them stars. They build bigger barriers, buy better celebrity lawyers, get more huge hideaways in farther-away lands. You could kill me now if I couldn't walk down the street in ambiguity. How much would you pay just to be free again? *Everything!*

* * * * *

Societies always generate a number of people willing and eager to live at least part of their lives in the public eye. The larger, more heterogeneous, and democratic a society is, the more such public people there will be aiming for the security of such a secular eternity. In a society committed to progress, the seeking of fame, the climbing of the ladder of renown, expresses something essential in that society's nature. Even the more grotesque forms of ostentation are connected to normal desires to be known for one's talents or for oneself. Entertainers and politicians, who court public appreciation (and possible disapproval) on a grand scale, cannot be considered normal members of their society. But they are certainly extensions of everyone's culturally fostered desire to be given his or her due.

–The Frenzy of Renown, Fame and Its History *by Leo Braudy*

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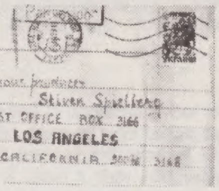


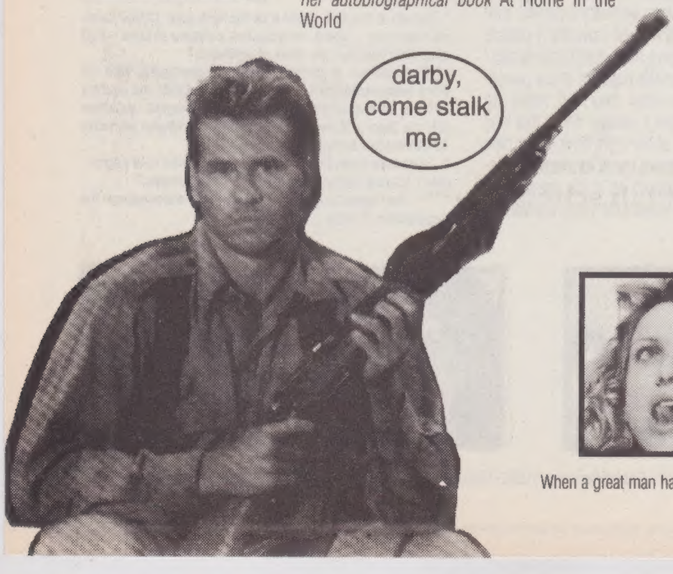
THE PROS: confidence, attention, friends, love, respect, feeling secure, money, plastic surgery, accessories, electronic equipment, being given free things, being able to give away things, being able to help friends and family, aquire big homes, expensive cars, food, drink, sex, drugs, travel, entertainment, parties, meeting other important people, being in on important secrets, not having to wait on line, being treated special, decadence, ego, massages, nice home furnishings you don't have to put together yourself, A MAID!, a personal assistant, a personal trainer, a dog, a pool, a car that makes most people jealous, an affair, a spiritual advisor, an AA meeting, a social responsibility of some useless sort that eases the guilt, a good view, a good day, a good autobiography, a feeling of superiority, immortality.

THE CONS: false idolization, fake friends, fake love, useless self-congratulatory affairs, videotapes of your sex life being sold on the internet, being recognized in public, followed and accosted, every move being monitored, every stupid thing done or accident gotten into elaborated on and embellished, every pound gained and hair lost being talk-show fodder, having to sue tabloids, having to punch out photographers, suddenly not being talked about, needing drugs to sustain the high, trepidation of letting down the fans or not being able to live up to your stardom, of being forgotten, doing *Playboy* or a B-movie or infomercial just to stay in the game, making a comeback (even though you felt you'd never gone), dying alone (but you don't need fame for that, it just seems more tragic that way), being made fun of – while alive or when you die (the great equalizer is much more harsh on celebrities – e.g. The Kennedy's)

* * * * *

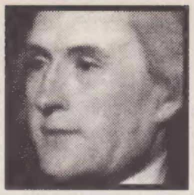
Oct 20th 1921
Dear Mr. Perkins –

…John Black wrote Who's Who to ask them to put me in. About November I received blanks from them & filled them out. I noticed that I wasn't in the book published last Spring. Now I don't care specially whether


darby, come stalk me.

Martin Luther King Jr

When a great man has become petrified, and everyone begins to proclaim his greatness, he has already turned into a puppet. –Lu Xun (1881-1936)



I'm in or not – nevertheless I'd like to know this. Do you have to pay for insertion of your name? I've heard recently that you did and I know I didn't pay anything. Didn't know you had to. Will you ask someone in the office there who's in it whether you do or not?

Sincerely, F. Scott Fitzgerald

* * * * *

THE REAL CHOSEN PEOPLE: Sitting in the public library, elementary school trip to learn and relearn those now antiquated and rarely used reference/index cards. I never paid attention, was never particularly efficient at finding everything needed, but would instead be distracted by the reading material that loomed from all sides, millions of words compressing the room to literary lunacy. One day, sitting to the back during one of these librarian-speaks, near the reference books, casually diverted by the big huge volumes, specifically *Who's Who* – indeed I wanted to know! And there were pages upon pages of important figures, people who were so significant as to warrant their names being listed in a book with other special members of society. It was maybe my first tangible worldly goal – to someday be included in these collections. Be one of the special, the worthy, the remembered. The only thing I recall thinking I could do to be important was to write a book. And I knew in order for it to stand out (whether it was great or not) I should do it while I was young, at least before the old age of 17.

But then, and I don't know what measures they use to determine one's worth, I was, many years later, sent a letter. My dream was finally coming true; I was being invited to be listed in the *Who's Who*. All I had to do was mail back the filled-out form, and they'd call. I knew it was a mistake, deduced that the prerequisites for entitlement must have much less value today than they did in the past. Still I sent back the paperwork and in no less than a month I was called. And then I had to question the reasons I so badly wanted to be included, and what it would mean to me now. For the life of me, I couldn't place any value on it any longer. There wasn't a reason I could come up with that made it make sense to have my special existence marked in time in this manner. Who read this thing? Who decided the chosen? Who in the world cared? Who actually read this!? Who was *Who?*

They called consistently for a year until giving up.

p.s. Oh, lookie what I got: email – for the CD version. Did all you entrepreneurs get one of these too?

Dear Candidate,

You were recently selected by The Office of Public Affairs to be included on The International Executive Guild's Who's Who CD-ROM.

Our Public Affairs Office gathers information from many recognized sources, including professional associations and societies, trade organizations, newspaper and magazine articles, professional reference publications, Web presence, and referrals from existing members.

As a highly respected professional in your field of expertise, we believe your contributions merit very serious consideration for inclusion on The International Executive Guild's Who's Who CD-ROM.

To maintain the level of accuracy, we ask you to click on the Web address highlighted below and fill out the brief bit of information required for inclusion. There is no cost or obligation to be listed on The International Executive Guild's Who's Who CD-ROM. All applicants will receive a free listing compliments of The International Executive Guild.

Remember, this site is for executives, professionals, & entrepreneurs only!

My Sincere Thanks, Lorraine A. Michaels, Office Of Public Affairs

* * * * *

The first famous person we interviewed in *Ben Is Dead*? Well, I mean, after they were already famous (because we did do Courtney Love long ago) was Duran Duran, maybe the first celebs who would talk to us since they were pre-comeback (see pg. 41). I think Kerin got the Beastie Boys right around then too. (But I didn't really understand the magnitude of their fame since it was too easy to touch them – I would always see Mike around and we'd sometimes find ourselves around the Grand Royal headquarters and I was never really a "fan." Anyway I was late to this for-the-most-part completely dull interview and could only get myself to print a paragraph's worth.) Tom Jones was a fluke – friends in high places – and the fact that he would answer our questions about the size of his "gear" was surprising. And talking to Anton LaVey before his death was a most pleasant addition to the weirdness.

We've had a number of famous people write or give us kind words over the years, and even the occasional celebrity has subscribed. I think, though, that the first big celebrity subscriber was Richard Ramirez (murderers are celebrities too). There was a weird thing going on that every time a celeb subscribed we'd lose the check. Belinda Carlisle subscribed to the *I Hate Brenda Newsletter* – I sent it to her even though I never actually got the money for them. Then, after months trying to talk to David Lee Roth during the Retro Hell period, getting turned down by every publicist in our way, he goes and subscribes! Shows what a publicist knows. I was so excited for Cliff, who had been trying to organize the interview, that I handed everything over to him. Suffice it to say it was never seen again. And Dave never got nothin' 'cause I didn't have the address.

* * * * *

THE CELEBRITY DEATH: People bet on them dying, people get affected by their deaths, people make horribly cruel and amazingly vicious jokes about them (and it's okay).

* * * * *

"It was August 16, 1977, and People *magazine's founding editor, Dick Stolley, was putting the finishing touches on the next week's cover. With deadline looming, Stolley mourned Elvis' poorly timed demise but didn't think it was worth replacing the cover he had planned. "The King" was dead, but as the nation grieved,* People's *cover would tout bug-eyed comedian Marty Feldman and actress Ann-Margaret in a movie remake of* Beau Geste. *Not putting Elvis on the cover – even if it meant stopping the presses – was a miscalculation that caused Stolley enormous regret and cost* People *millions in lost newsstand sales. But it was a valuable lesson. To appreciate how well it was learned, count the number of covers* People *has posthumously dedicated to Princess Diana. Never again would a celebrity go out of this world without a proper full-cover send-off from* People.

"…The People *formula is this: • Young is better than old. • Pretty is better than ugly. • Rich is better than poor. • TV is better than music. • Music is better than movies. • Movies are better than sports. • Anything is better than politics. • And nothing is better than the celebrity dead. The recipe, devised by Stolley (although movies have since ascended, and 'ordinary people caught up in extraordinary circumstances' would later add to the winning mix), was extracted from the magazine's early successes and failures."*

– The Los Angeles Times, *February 24, 1999*

* * * * *

I didn't even want to buy the issue of *People* with Kerin and me taking up a full page in honor of *Hating Brenda*. It was a horrible photo-shoot, the photographer trying to capture us posing in idiotic ways and Kerin yelling at him, and it's no wonder they picked the butt-ugliest photo. A good thing they put the just-dead-of -AIDS Arthur Ash on the cover (old, not totally attractive, sports), because I imagine at least a couple hundred thousand fewer people bought the issue.

* * * * *

What do you want from it?

* * * * *

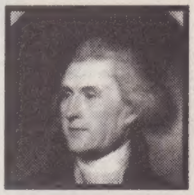
Telly: "If you deflower a girl…man, oh man, you're the man. No one could ever do that again. You know, you're the only one…no one…no one has the power to do that again."

Casper: "The way I see it, it's like getting fame, you know what I'm saying. Say you was to die tomorrow, right, 50 years from now all the virgins you ever fucked are going to remember you, right. They're gonna tell their grandkids about that shit, 'That Telly, he sure was good in the sack.'"

– Scene from the movie Kids

* * * * *

I wonder how much pleasure one gets out of being famous when they're dead. Ten feet under, do you somehow hear the cries of people swooning for you? Of people admiring your charms, your good looks, your wit? Do you get a jolt when they recollect your life? From when you were a sweet innocent to when you really matured into something spectacular, original, one of a kind? Not just *anyone* gets famous, you know. It takes something special. A drive, a power, a gift (from God). Something that makes you stand out from any old dry cleaner or meter maid. Or business man or magazine editor. Something that flashes in the eyes. The spark of something brilliant. Or cold. At least mesmerizing. I loved that scene in that movie – was it *Funny Face*? – where these guys are looking for the perfect model. Walking down the street just a few paces in front



Rolling Stone

Heather Graham: the only famous girl in my high school yearbook

Enduring fame is promised only to those writers who can offer to successive generations a substance constantly renewed; for every generation arrives upon the scene with its own particular hunger. –André Gide (1869-1951)

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of them is Audrey Hepburn. The guys are saying they really need a head turner. Someone people can't take their eyes off of. In a very clever scene Audrey proceeds to make the most awful faces she can come up with, and with all the passers-by taking notice the guys (who could only see the reactions, not the cause) were instantly impressed. Anyway, Audrey's dead. So what does it matter? What does it matter how infinitely gorgeous she was? I saw a girl that could have played her sister – maybe with an Asian mother – working at the local Banana Republic store the other day, and besides wondering why she wasn't ringing up my order, and before I eventually walked out of the place fed up with waiting, all I could think was how long this girl would work with the minions before realizing her potential for being someone super famous, or at least the girlfriend of (and therefore by relation), because this work was obviously below her. Was I trained to think this? But I can only imagine she thought this too. All this because she looked like a star. And don't most girls in retail clothing want to look like stars? Isn't some man or agent or secret agent man going to come along and swoop them away to the life they deserve? What is their optional drive? Children?* A house? What is the thing that gets them up to go to work at the store? Money? – temporarily. But the dream – ultimately – is it not fame? I mean, fame has the power to hold all those other desires under its banner. Appreciation and just rewards for their existence.

* * * * *

> *"Death is not the end if you've gotten a gold star for living, if you've learned your lesson well this time around. If you were like a leaf that just turns brown and falls off the tree, then you're not a very special person. And if you're not, then you won't turn brown. And that's pretty much my idea of death and death being the great equalizer. If there's any prospect of immortality, it will be based on that – doing something that people will remember you for…I want to live on in any way, shape or form – and if you live in the memories of others you can live forever…It's better to put it all down, document it right now, and have it speak for itself three centuries later. That's what I'm doing now."*
> *– Anton LaVey (interview with* Ben Is Dead, *issue #25)*

* * * * *

When I interviewed Anton LaVey I was hoping to uncover life's (and the afterlife's) tricks and magical spells. There were a few. But when, while discussing the concept of immortality, he told me that ultimately the most important thing was to be *remembered,* I was jarred. After this long life, the thing discovered for one's continued existence was not an E ticket to Hell but that, after your death, your unavoidable end, the quintessential element is that *you are remembered.* And I just really want to know, what does it do for you once you are dead? Will I really be living on? A phantom me? Is there already a phantom me living on in the memories of people now while I still exist? In each photo ever taken? Every piece of celluloid that captured me in a moment of time that can now be viewed by another, where I may be thought of by another? Is that a good thing? Or like paranoid Indian beliefs, is that possibly a very bad thing? To be documented, and more rigidly remembered, and accounted for, and restricted by one's past. Do those winsome feelings of being thought of in a desperate fan-drooling manner actually mean something? (Is there a substance to it I'm just not realizing?) Bad or good? And who is more desperate, the fan or the star?

I agree with Mr. Updike, when one thinks about the need to be thought of or that their efforts might be noticed, it alters their focus and puts it back upon themselves, essentially closing off their vision. (An observable point in many of the famous, when they lose their pizzazz, or the element that originally warranted their gaining fame, and they become essentially self-referential.) This contemplation of possible glory tricks you to feel amphetamine excitation, but it's really an orgasmic release. And you're left with wobbly legs. And the need for more. More compliments. More ME. And I have to say, I'm so glad that Darby exists, 'cause I need her. I need to use her to get around in this world. But I don't want to BE her forever. 'Cause ultimately all she wants is to be liked, and admired, and told she's decently intelligent and cute, maybe even to be sought after, like a star, at the very least in *someone's* mind (but nevermind all this impotent philosophizing…You do like me, don't you?). And in this society that may seem perfectly normal, favorable, driven even, but in truth I have to say I think it's downright tragic.

---

* Another deed that's supposed to equate ones "living on" after death. Which in that case you can give up and hope "the best for your children" Children and family and old age and sickness or lack of energy are the most typical deterrents/antidotes for the urge.

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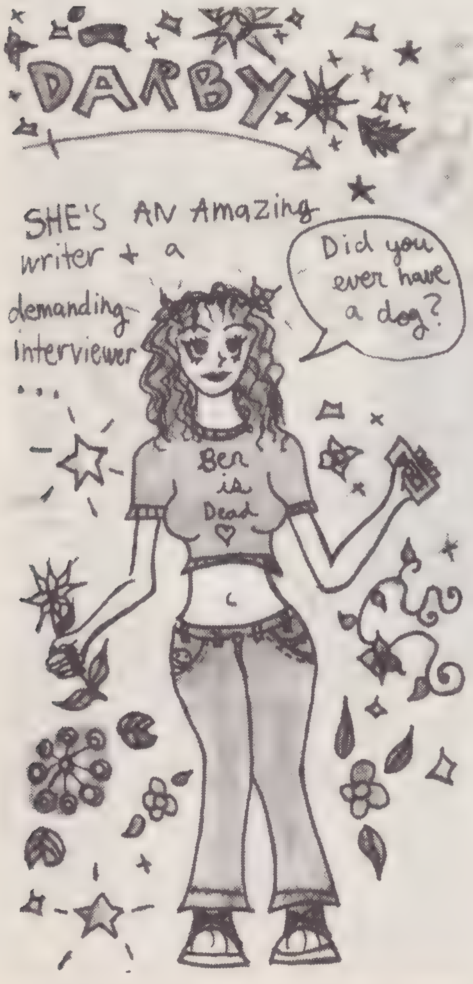
psst...

Darby,
O how the mighty have fallen. KCRW? **KCR-fucking-W???!!!** Is nothing sacred? The founder, editrix, and guiding light of what is (was?) the hippest Zine on the westcoast on the same corrupt station with **Jason "Monotonous" Bently** and that sellout Chris "Dorritos"? For shame, Darby, for shame. KXLU is where you should do interviews. They're as real as you. Yeah, yeah, I know, they haven't got that big an audience. But KCRW is nothing but whitebread yuppies. You know that. Or you use to.

You survived your interview with the founder of the Church of Satan, don't sell your beautiful soul to the devil now. Or do you want to become a CELEBRITY?

(Suggestions for your celebrity issue: the Brad Pitt story starring Val Kilmer, the Julia Roberts story starring Geena Davis, the Michael Jackson story starring the Artist Formerly Known as Prince – you get the idea.)

Stay real,
Frank


DARBY
SHE'S AN Amazing writer + a demanding interviewer...
Did you ever have a dog?
Ben is Dead

i'm just reading issue #29 and i started reflecting, back in the day, i miss those old times. now i'm bummed to hear you guys are closing shop on one of the most genius things l.a. has to offer. oh well i still think you're cool, even though i never see you anymore.

your pal, **jenny shimizu**, a.k.a. chicken.....

* * * * *

darby, *ben is dead* has finally reached the space between azimuth and zenith. this issue is fucking fantastic. i read it twice, just for giggles the second time. the stories and the art rules. i highly recommend this issue of a great magazine, and it was a real pleasure to see how the different comics artists did a cd review. congrats on an issue i waited two years for. Ronan

* * * * *

Agreed. My favorite of the reviews was the Eric Reynolds one: it made essential use of the comics format to make its critical points, and the art was good. **Adam**

* * * * *

Ben Is Dead,
We are very pleased that you will be featuring an interview with David Cassidy in your upcoming Celebrity Issue. We have sent out a notice to all our members worldwide with your address and instructions to send five dollars for a copy of this issue. You should receive a great number of requests.

We would also like to extend our thanks to you for including the name and address of our fan club at the end of the interview.

Sincerely,
Barbara Pazmino

* * * * *

darby–
My first issue was the retro hell Incredible Hulk cover which, I admit, i bought at my comic shop for the cover alone. Hilarious! So, i have a look, and it was terrific! completely enjoyed it. i grew up in Plano, Texas, suburb of dallas, then teen suicide capital of the u.s., now teen heroin hype center of the universe. it was uncanny how much you guys nailed my life. i also loved the over-my-head California culture moments.

Then came the bloody doll cover. i didn't love it. but who cares?

So, now it's comics! i admit to being slightly fanboy-ish so when i read the opening essay, wow, completely on target, even down to the Aquaman focus. I'm not sure who Chris Lee actually is, but Son-of-Stan had to cross my mind. The underground aspect of the issue was great. I loved the cute teenage girl you interviewed, and *Cuckoo* sounds amazing. Japan girl comics; nasty comics (with a nice gay bent my comic store doesn't explore, and including tom of finland, thanks!); *Tart*; you really have a great point of view. I would have loved for you to find some superhero stud artist or writer and ask them about some of the things Chris Lee wrote about.
there was a nice uncomfortableness in the discussion with *Tart* 's creator that i would love to get from a Marvel guy. i guess it might be hard to go on record about that and work for Marvel or D.C. but then again, why not? if i can be out at work, why can't they? I mean, I can completely imagine a whole lot of obliviousness on the part of the Rob Leifelds of the world, but there have to be a couple of these guys who draw their heroes and think, "Man, he is hot!"

The *Tart* interview was super. i loved the matter-of-factness of your questions, and his little bit of squirminess about them. it seemed like he would have been more at home with a more combative reactionary response to *Tart*, and found your attitude to it a little off-putting. nice, and very honest.

Anyway, i really appreciate your magazine. Bravo!
Tim

P.S. Hope you make lots of money with the Retro Hell book. I'm on my fifth copy – keep giving them away, and they are always received enthusiastically. thanks!

* * * * *

Darby: Sorry to hear the news. I know how it is though. I started *Baby Split* in 1990. I'll make it past ten years but not having put out an issue for close to three years helps. I do look forward to more issues of *Socially Fucking Retarded*. I enjoyed that first one.

It was good to see you at APE. I've got such a crush on you. It looked like you split early though. I did manage to sell around twelve copies of *The Book of Prison Slang*, but I had to grab people and tell them to buy it 'cause it's only a buck. Maybe I sounded scary.

I hope we can get together the next time I'm in LA. I'll practice beforehand too so I won't be such a bad bowler. Promise. That's not a good way for me to be remembered.

Did you celebrate Pesach? We had the family in town here for it. Hope you're well. Take care.
Julian

* * * * *

Darby:
My life, perhaps like yours, has been hectic and emotionally stressful of late. As a result, and 7 hours before I have to be on a plane for Washington, D.C., where I will be staying until July 11, I regret to report that, pending a deadline extension that I can't presume will come *(you can't?! -ed)*, these meager record reviews will be all I can write for the last *BID*. I really wish it were otherwise, but the work on the issue, combined with my still-inchoate understanding of what was wanted of me, combined with my usual inability to communicate with you, and coming as it did during a time when paying freelance work had, of fiscal necessity, to occupy my mind (along with the book I must finish by year's end – well, it just wasn't good timing. I

When I was in prison I was wrapped up in all those deep books. That Tolstoy crap. People shouldn't read that stuff. –Mike Tyson on what he read before he decided he preferred comic books.

psst...more

don't even know if you need rec. reviews in this format since you don't need to further convince people to send you free CDs. But here are some. I love you and miss you and hope we can work together on something in the near future when I have more time to devote to your needs and you have more time to communicate. Working with you is always a fascinating adventure, a pleasure and a privilege, and I have great admiration for your achievements. Perhaps, in the end, my thoughts on celebrity are too intense and personal to communicate; and my time is too tangled these past two months to devote to heavy research/reporting. I have been writing a celebrity-related column for MOTHER JONES which may or may not ever see print.

My one observation on celebrity: They hang out with each other because each of them alone cannot find succor in the very fact of their own celebrity, which is strangely unreal to them; it is most successfully reflected in all the other famous people – those faces they've always seen in the magazines – that they can see and be seen with. They know they are famous by the company they keep – no one is a starfucker like a star. Print this if you wish.

Brian Doherty

* * * * *

Good Morning, Good to hear from you, bad to hear of the mag's imminent demise. You know I'll do my part. Let me know if there is anything you'd particularly want me to handle. Among my rough ideas:

- Musings on the dirt-filled footprints of Charles Nelson, the Chinese Theater's Lost Celebrity.
- The tale of my half-hearted quest to get Crispin Glover his star on the Walk O' Fame.
- Hugely famous people you've never heard of, Celebrities of the non-English speaking world!
- A compilation of "first Celebrities I saw" stories, with "Celebrities I grew up with" stories for native Angelenos.
- My 15 minutes, the story of NAFTAT's brush with fame.
- Fifteen Plus, how you can stretch out your eventual celebrity.

Etc, etc,etc,etc,etc,

Luv, **Bruce Elliott**

* * * * *

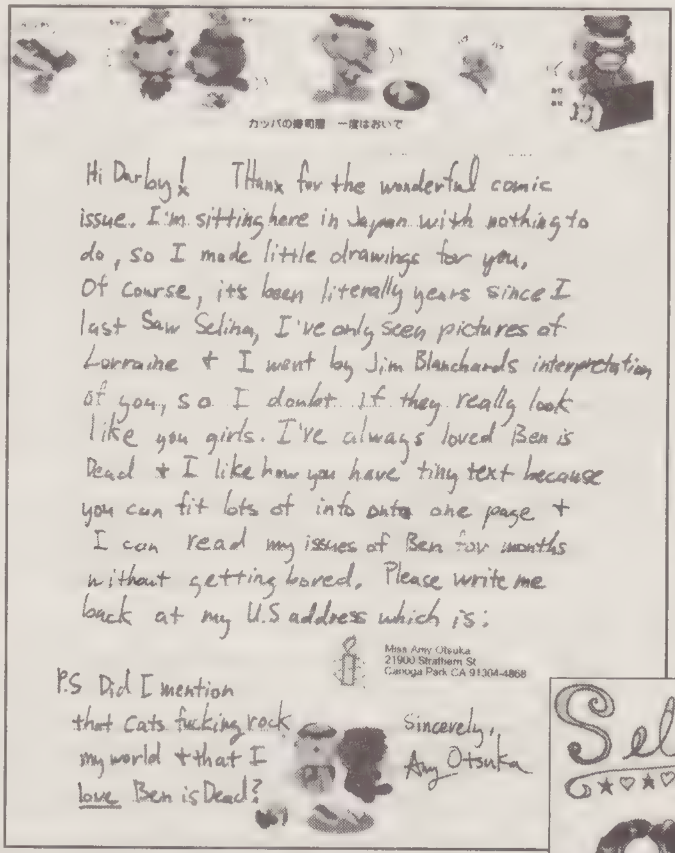
darbs,

...HEY! I wanna write for BID's celebrity ish! I love celebs, girl! E rox and my dream is to see my smiling face pop up in *People Weekly*'s Star Tracks! you know who my favorite celeb of all-time is? DUH! it's courtney, dummy! do ya know her? can i write about her? will ya let me interview her for *BID*? i wanna lick her and Frances's pussies. tell her to call me, 'K? you too, girl. 503-XXX-XXXX. i am really lonely. Seriously. How's Weird Al? Bye.

Sky "The Fly" Ryan

Hey Darby,

You probably don't remember me, but a couple years ago after my magazine (*Planet*) went under in Tempe, AZ, I spent a couple months in L.A. and while there tried to buy you lunch. We never actually spoke, just exchanged phone messages and emails a few times, and it turned out you didn't really have the time (or maybe you just didn't want to hang out with some strange guy for a couple hours). No problem. I just wanted to get acquainted, as I was getting set to move to NYC and wanted you to be familiar with me so when I started sending you story ideas from the Right Coast I'd have a bit more of an in. Having been an editor, I knew that it would be easier to get something in if we had actually met. If nothing else, I wanted to give a little back to the person behind my favorite magazine.



カッパの[illegible]　一度はおいで

Hi Darby! Thanx for the wonderful comic issue. I'm sitting here in Japan with nothing to do, so I made little drawings for you. Of course, its been literally years since I last Saw Selina, I've only seen pictures of Lorraine + I went by Jim Blanchards interpretation of you, so I doubt if they really look like you girls. I've always loved Ben is Dead + I like how you have tiny text because you can fit lots of info onto one page + I can read my issues of Ben for months without getting bored. Please write me back at my U.S address which is:

Miss Amy Otsuka
21900 Strathern St
Canoga Park CA 91304-4868

P.S Did I mention that Cats fucking rock my world + that I love Ben is Dead?

Sincerely,
Amy Otsuka

So I did make the move. I ran into you at the Kill Zinesters Tour at Luna Lounge one night, but you were pretty busy, so I didn't say anything. In the five seconds I would have had your attention, I knew I would just come off as some babbling guy telling you things you've already heard a million times before and I would walk off wishing I'd have just kept my mouth shut.

A few months after that – it's a long story – I became the editor of *POPsmear* and, unfortunately, soon found that you and James didn't have the best relationship. I think he wrote some crap about you in *POPsmear*, and I read some things you wrote about him. If I remember correctly, he was pissed that you didn't thank him for the postcards he had supplied for the Kill Zinesters event and went off on you. As you explained later in a piece I read, I don't remember which zine it was in, I know it wasn't *Ben Is Dead*, but whatever/wherever *(it was* Socially Fucking Retarded. *–ed)* You explained that you were busy and weren't able to give him the quality time/thanks/bow he felt he deserved. Which I'm sure is true. Putting on an event takes a lot of time, and you can never give anyone the time they feel they deserve. James should have understood that as much as anyone. But he does that sometimes, and he gets, as I'm sure you've noticed, a tad vengeful. (I'm trying to work him through these things, and if nothing else, you'll notice that his "Jackass of the Month" and "Gospel According to James" columns/revenge outlets no longer appear in *POPsmear* – a coup in itself.)

Anyway, despite the relationship between James and yourself, I always have been and still am a big fan of *Ben Is Dead* and of you. I'm amazed, impressed and even envious of what you accomplished over the years, and especially the way you did it. To me, *Ben Is Dead* is the prototype for everything a zine/magazine should be. Now that *Ben Is Dead* is on its way out, I wanted to thank you for all the great issues over the years. (Not to mention the *Retro Hell* book, which was fantastic.) You accomplished something few will ever equal, and you should be very proud. I'm not sure why you're hanging it up, but I guess we all have to go sometime. It will be missed by many.

I doubt you've read *POPsmear* in the past year and a half since I've been here, and that's all right. But I imagine one day we shall meet, and I hope you are able to separate me from your past experiences with my publisher. (It happens all too often as it is, but it's most bothersome when it happens with someone I respect.)

Anyway, I just want to thank you for all your great work with *Ben Is Dead*. I've enjoyed it so much over the years, and it's been a great source of inspiration for me and an influence with each magazine I've been involved with. I don't know what you have up your sleeve, but I'm sure it will be great. And if ever you are in NYC, or when I'm in L.A. sometime, the offer for lunch on me is still there.

Sincerely, **Troy Fuss**

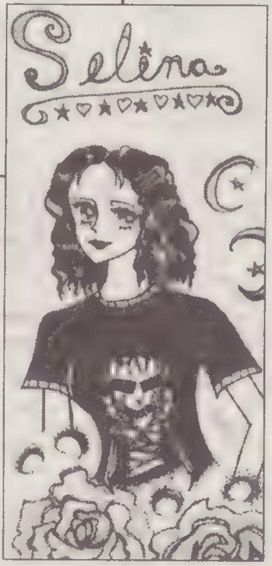
* * * * *

I will definitely ask grandpa for pictures and I don't think he has any of him with celebs, but pix of him back in the day would be way cool. That's what i was thinking, too. I did a prelim call to him and he's gonna start thinking about people for the next coupla days, so when I talk to him, he'll hopefully come up with some good 'uns that I didn't know about. Any editorial angle here?

But speaking of celebs, I'm at the DMV this morning getting my California driver's license. I'm in line and I see this old guy puttering around behind the counter and I recognize him. It's Charlton Heston, getting the VIP treatment! Well, I pass my test (on the first try, thank you very much) and then get in line to get my picture taken. Just as I'm about to have the pic snapped, "Moses" comes out from behind the counter and stands right next to me, waiting to have his picture taken.

"Hey, can I get both of us in the picture?" I ask the lady taking the picture. She doesn't get the joke. So, when I get my license in the mail, you won't be able to see it in the picture, but I'm standing right next to the head of the NRA.

Jeff Fox



art by Amy O.

Do you mind if I sit back a little? Because your breath is very bad. –Donald Trump to Larry Kind on Larry King's radio show

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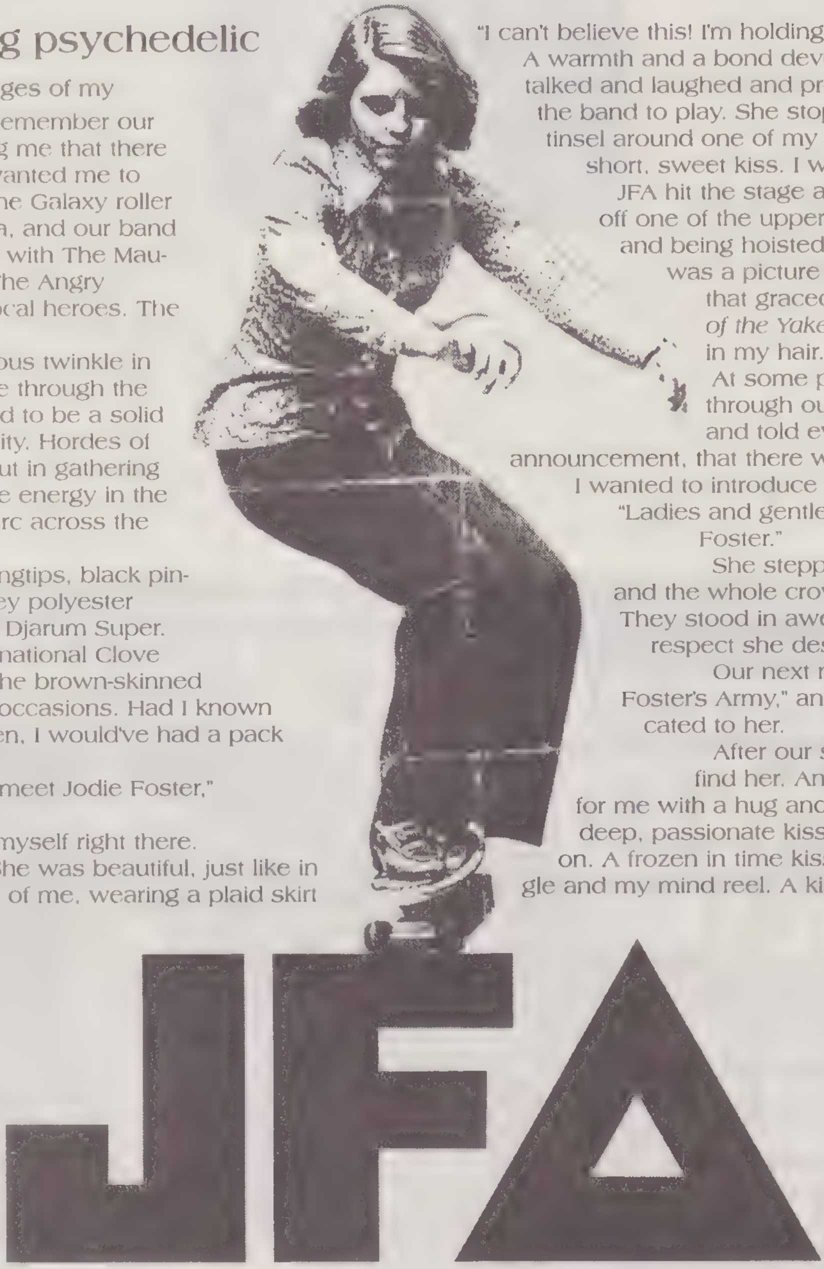
MY LOVE AFFAIR WITH JODIE FOSTER

BY BRIAN BRANNON



It was a swirling psychedelic night torn from the pages of my turbulent adolescence. I remember our drummer Bam-Bam telling me that there was someone there he wanted me to meet. The location was the Galaxy roller rink in Fullerton, California, and our band was set to play that night with The Mau-Maus, Social Distortion, The Angry Samoans and assorted local heroes. The year was 1983.

Bam had a mischievous twinkle in his eye as he ushered me through the beginnings of what looked to be a solid night of slam & dive activity. Hordes of lurkers were slinking about in gathering droves. You could feel the energy in the air that was destined to arc across the dancefloor.

I was wearing my wingtips, black pin-striped pants and a paisley polyester shirt. In my hand I held a Djarum Super. As a member of the International Clove Brotherhood, I reserved the brown-skinned Djarums only for special occasions. Had I known what was about to happen, I would've had a pack with me.

"Brian, I want you to meet Jodie Foster," said Bam. "Jodie, Brian."

I just about fell over myself right there.

I couldn't believe it. She was beautiful, just like in the movies. Right in front of me, wearing a plaid skirt and a sweater, was my number one favorite actress of all time. The one for whom I reserved my most special affection. My darling, my love... Jodie Foster in the flesh. How was I going to maintain my cool in front of the woman of my adoration?

Somehow I managed to mingle and make small talk for a while, and then, in a flash of genius, suggested we walk around, thereby freeing ourselves from trivial interruptions so we could continue to explore our personalities in conversation.

We milled through the gathering punkers and I marveled at her knowledge of the local scene. At one point I found my hand slipping into hers, and I remember thinking, "I can't believe this! I'm holding Jodie Foster's hand!"

A warmth and a bond developed between us. We talked and laughed and pretty soon it was time for the band to play. She stopped and tied a piece of tinsel around one of my curls and gave me a short, sweet kiss. I was in heaven.

JFA hit the stage and I remember jumping off one of the upper levels into the crowd and being hoisted back up again. There was a picture taken of me coming up that graced the back of our *Valley of the Yakes* LP, with that tinsel tied in my hair.

At some point about midway through our set, I stopped the band and told everyone I had an announcement, that there was a very special person I wanted to introduce to the audience.

"Ladies and gentlemen," I said, "Jodie Foster."

She stepped out onto the stage and the whole crowd just shut the fuck up. They stood in awe, showing her the respect she deserved.

Our next number was "Jodie Foster's Army," and, of course, it was dedicated to her.

After our set I made a beeline to find her. And there she was, waiting for me with a hug and a kiss. A slow, long, deep, passionate kiss. A kiss to build a dream on. A frozen in time kiss that made my toes tingle and my mind reel. A kiss that found us pulling each other closer. I couldn't believe I was kissing Jodie Foster.

We made our way away from the bustle and sought the comfort of the Big Green Bus. There we laughed and kissed and generally ignored everybody else while becoming more into each other with each passing breath.

By some miracle I talked her into crashing with us at Don's parents, and we laughed and joked and were feeling allright all the way over.

We soon found ourselves eating Don's mom's world-famous bean dip, sandwiches and cinnamon rolls with orange icing, all washed down with an icy cold Coke. Truly some of the finer things in life.

A very quiet and tasteful way to be famous is to have a famous relation. Then you can not only be nothing, you can do nothing, too. –P.J. O'Rourke

Jodie seemed to appreciate them too. But soon we found ourselves alone in an extra room with the door closed and the lights out and our two bodies grinding in persistent unison. The friction made us feverish and we pulled at each other with a burning longing that continued to grow.

When we finally copulated it was like *Love American Style* – fireworks going off in the sky. Just boom-boom-boom, mind-blowing cosmic convergence. The ceiling melted and reality blurred for that split second of time in our seemingly endless microcosm.

The next morning we had cinnamon rolls with orange icing and ice cold Cokes, not because that was all there was to choose from, but because that was what we wanted. And it was good.

After the Big Green Bus dropped Jodie off where she lived in Fullerton, our manager Tony Victor motioned me up to the front of the bus and said, "Brian, I hope you know that wasn't Jodie Foster."

I was aghast.

Somewhere deep inside I knew what he was saying was true, but I didn't want to believe it.

I refused. I refused to admit I refused. But deep inside I knew it was true.

I saw her again the very next night when we played the Olympic Auditorium in LA with The Addicts and Peter & The Test Tube Babies. As I looked out at the swirling mass of hand-to-hand slamming on the dancefloor I saw the bodies transform into a human whirlpool. I knew it was no place to be if I wanted to spend time with Jodie after the set. If I went into that, I might not come out.

After the gig we hung out together and she asked if I knew that she really wasn't Jodie Foster. I sheepishly replied that I did.

I told her it didn't matter at all and continued to call her Jodie anyway. It was our private little joke.

Though I lived in Phoenix and she in Fullerton, we saw each other as much as two kids with no cars could under those circumstances. Eventually the calls and letters began to fade, but I knew we would always maintain a bond.

I called her a few years ago and found out she had a couple of kids and still lived in the same area. I sincerely hope everything works out in her life the way she wants.

When I look back on those times I remember a sweet little girl and the way she could make me smile. She may not have been Jodie Foster, but considering all the fun we had together, she was good enough for me.

"My Jodie"

* * * * *

Brian's been the singer for Jodie Foster's Army for since 1981, when he was 14. He surfs the Cliffs in Huntington but any kooks that want to show up will be subject to Blatant Localism. He writes and edits the skate mag Evidence *and it's distributed freely at select skate shops and locales. JFA has a new album called* Only Live Once *that is "the best thing we've ever done." The real Jodie's still never been to a show.*

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VARIOUS THOUGHTS ON THE ROLE OF CELEBRITY IN EVERYDAY LIFE

BY THOMAS CONROY

Celebrities serve a variety of functions in everyday life. They can be love objects, lust objects, hate objects, objects of ridicule, objects to be laughed at rather than with, and they can signify as political icons, religious icons, hipsters extraordinaire, or objects of a cult of personality. When they serve not so much as objects of mass consumption but rather as personally selected icons and sources of idiosyncratic inspiration, they do so on a smaller and more intimate scale than that used to measure fame. As the idea of a scale used to measure celebrity success indicates, there are worlds of difference between cult and mass stardom. It is often the case, then, that cult stardom represents something like an avante-garde of fame, and that cult stars have the impact of lasting importance, in contrast to the hype strewn success of the more major stars whose star may shine brighter but can also burn out more fantastically. Comparisons are revealing; Jim Morrison, so good at playing to the cameras, was much more famous than the Velvet Underground, whom he stole from. But the Velvets influenced countless bands and various other creative types and are now recognized for their genius; the Doors, on the other hand, seem to have had a lasting impact on hardly anyone, Oliver Stone and a Rock and Roll Hall of Fame induction notwithstanding. Or, Tom Cruise is a big star right at the moment - his name on the marquee sells lots of tickets at the suburban multiplexes; Steve Buscemi is a cult star whose name sells lots fewer tickets but whose cult following will likely insure that he will be remembered, fondly, decades from now. These and other examples make pretty clear the difference between high-level fame via a marketplace which rewards flashiness and a lower level, cultish, and potentially more lasting fame via a knowing audience with an appreciation for quirkiness and artistic integrity.

The point is that the very notion of celebrity, and its place in our lives, runs deep. Sometimes when we are asleep, we have strange dreams about celebrities; and sometimes we dream that we ourselves are celebrities. Celebrity-dom is thus deep in our unconsciousness. But one context in which the unconscious fixation with celebrity comes to the surface is in the routine celebrity encounter, a moment in which reality imitates dream. For ordinary folks, such events, when they happen, take on a kind of deep significance. On occasion, as in the encounter between Howard Hughes and Melvin Dummar and its aftermath (celebrated in Jonathan Demme's film *Melvin and Howard*), a celebrity encounter can itself be celebrity-conferring on the ordinary participant. This is not unlike the phenomenon of knowing someone who is distantly connected to some bigwig (e.g. having a cousin whose friend's older brother went to kindergarten with Bruce Springsteen). Two of my own celebrity encounters occurred in NYC, a city where celebrities are rather heavily clustered. One took place when I was six, as my aunt and I unexpectedly met Soupy Sales, arguably the second greatest kiddie-show host of all time (after Pee-Wee Herman), in the Port Authority bus terminal, inside a Walgreens-type convenience store. He was still hosting his own show, so we recognized him right away. We talked to him and my aunt got him to sign the back of an "on sale" sign for me. He looked at me, said something like, "Oh, are you for sale?," signed it, patted me on the head, and politely made his way out. Years later, on 8th Street and 6th Avenue, I ran into and obtained an autograph from Joey Ramone, who, with his girlfriend, was busily tearing a large poster for a Ramones show off a wall. I knew right away it was Joey, who's a pretty distinctive-looking guy. I tried to make small talk, but Joey was pretty shy and I was a bit nervous. So after a minute or two, he and his girl began walking down 8th street, in the direction of the Bowery and CBGBs. Actually, they could have been heading back to Joey's pad in the East Village. Come to think of it, why do I even know the neighborhood where Joey Ramone lives? Why does anyone come upon and retain this sort of information? I'll admit that I have a natural curiosity about such things. I've mentioned celebrity dreams. I once had a dream in which the Ramones and I were hanging out like a bunch of old friends. I actually think, based on what I've learned, that Joey Ramone and I could be friends. But it seems that, by and large, stars and their fans are just that - stars and fans - an inherently unequal relationship.

We use celebrities to mark both space and time. I live in Boston, where the Revolutionary War heroes are memorialized in various parts of the city. Paul Revere is perhaps the biggest icon - his house is a main tourist stop, there are statues and paintings devoted to him, and there are actors who depict him in costume as part of the annual historical pageants. Sam Adams is a bit less sacred, having had his image appropriated by the Sam Adams Brewing Company, but he's nonetheless seen as a Bostonian, and a rather beloved one at that. Meanwhile, informed by *Spin* magazine, I have learned that

"I knew some of the things that Donnie was up against. There's a certain Newtonian law about fame being equal to the intensity of your downfall." –Cheech Marin on *Nash Bridges* co-star Don Johnson. *LA Times*, 1999 one of the buildings a few blocks from me is where Aerosmith used to live. Aerosmith's now pretty awful, but they used to rock out, like the proto-punk rockers they were. (I am trying, now, to find out where the Cars used to live.) Finally, in addition to mythologizing its revolutionaries (as well as its more colorful gangsters and politicos), Boston also mythologizes its Red Sox. Even Bill Buckner, who was run out of town with death threats after his blunder in the 1986 World Series, is remembered in great anecdotal detail.

Some celebrities seem only to be famous for being famous. I always wondered why they kept reappearing on game shows, TV talk shows or *Love Boat* episodes, since they seemed to display no noticeable talents whatsoever. Some names from this list: Jo Anne Pflug, John Davidson, Susan Anton, Zsa Zsa Gabor*, Connie Stevens, George Hamilton, Ann Jillian, George Gobel, Orson Bean, David Birney, Jack Cassidy, Phyllis George, among others. Of course, the vacuity of such persons is fascinatingly post-modern.

Some celebrities are famous for their reclusiveness, which seems a bit ironic. Greta Garbo was the icon of this stance. So, too, is JD Salinger, hero of disaffected and literate high schoolers everywhere. The iconography of the reclusive celebrity type is such that stories have been published and filmed about the quest to meet such recluses. John Lennon fell into a certain sort of reclusivity in the sense that he gave up on the things which had become part of his persona, for the sake of some tranquility. Unlike most other millionaire rock stars, however, he avoided seclusion in a remote mansion; instead, he more or less just blended in with the crowd like the city fixture he had become and remained accessible.

But the normative high-level celebrity pattern seems instead to be more cyclical, involving roller coaster-like highs and lows, with periods of cooling out. Part of this is market-driven, with fickle audiences continuously turning their attentions to the latest product. And partly it is driven by celebrity need itself, and by a deep ambivalence about being famous. One could describe a dialectic, by which the audience is initially created through a seductive promise of mutual love and devotion. As the audience grows ever more demanding - and as it is both taken for granted by the established star and their coterie of advisors and seduced by up and comers - the star, torn between work and play, responsibility and hedonism, becomes gradually exhausted and reaches a crash point. This provides the necessary conditions for the later triumphant comeback. There are, however, exceptions to this established pattern.

One basis for celebrity seems to be the dichotomy of nobodies vs. somebodies: status-mindedness and status-seeking are embedded deeply in our consciousness. Every regime - be it the movie biz, the music biz, the arts world, sports, politics, religion, and every high school on the planet - seems to have its high rankers, its promising talented types, its suck-ups, its rebels, its weirdos, its fools, and its nobodies. Celebrity seems like an expression of such stratification, only magnified for all to see.

The overlap between politics and showbiz - with all the tensions of populism and elitism - should thus not come as any great surprise. From Reagan to Redgrave, celebrities have long used their fame as soap-boxes for pursuing pet projects, be it gun ownership or gay rights, anti-communism or support for the PLO. Many have shown a great willingness to associate themselves, for a whole host of reasons, with holders of vast economic and political power; one great example is Grace Kelly, who went from stunningly beautiful upper-class Philadelphia debutante to Hollywood star to European royalty, where she and her disturbed offspring were then brought down several notches as continuous tabloid fodder aimed at lumpen proletariat housewives (a social class about whom the various entertainment industries, particularly Hollywood, remain deeply confused). Today's Hollywood is filled with power seekers, particularly those operating under the guise of being known for supporting a key, and often chic cause, be it Barbra Streisand's support for women's empowerment, Richard Gere's promotion of the Dalai Lama, or Mary Tyler Moore's hatred of animal experimentation. Politicians, likewise, have learned to imitate Hollywood celebrities as they seek to reach the masses by projecting images which are partially authentic and partially manufactured. Occasionally, politics can be used as the basis for great art: The Clash's *Sandinista*, Bikini Kill's first EP, Godard's *Weekend*, Tim Robbin's *Bob Roberts*, Woody Guthrie's leftist folk anthems, The Mekons' *Fear and Whiskey*, The Dead Kennedy's *Fresh Fruit for Rotting Vegetables*, Public Enemy's *It Takes A Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back*, Diego Rivera's Marxist murals, and Michelle Shocked's *Short Sharp Shocked* all come to mind. However, much of the more explicitly political art is crudely obvious and much less effective than it attempts, or pretends, to be. There is, perhaps, a fine line between attempting to inspire and trying to indoctrinate a mass audience.

The question of celebrities and politics raises interesting questions about the ownership of fame. Who does the celebrity belong to? If fame comes from the masses, does it belong, in a sense, to them? Or is this mostly a free-enterprise relationship in which the celebrity (or his/her corporate sponsors) can own his/her own persona and thus do whatever with it (and the many privileges it accrues)? Such questions of ownership point, perhaps, to a dynamic in which exciting new stars are continually needed to replace those who have lost their luster. A case in point: In the 1970s, most of the biggest British showbiz celebrities were derided in the leftist British press as "tax exiles." With fame came the good life of having one's every whim catered to. As such artists went about enjoying the fruits of their success, their artistic production then tended to become much less enthralling and more self-referential, being completely removed from such original sources of inspiration as youthful prole agitation or ties to the normal, everyday world. Of course, by the time any of them got big enough to move out of the UK and into NY, LA, or some tropical locale where the bars serve good scotch, they were likely too big for Britain and now belonged to the world. Of course, the void left in the talent drain in Old Blighty led to a creative renaissance in music and film a bit later on, as a new generation of stars drew inspiration from such things as the political-economic crises of the post-colonial U.K.

Ultimately, it seems, celebrities are mirrors of the culture that produces and consumes them. They are of, though not necessarily for, the people. They serve artistic and entertainment functions, but also social and political functions of various sorts. Famous individuals may rise and fall, but the idea of celebrity is pretty well fixed in our minds and in our culture. In fact, it seems like the idea of fame itself is likely to become ever more famous as an accompaniment to global capitalism and global pop-culture.

* * * * *

Thomas Conroy lives in Boston, where he teaches sociology, and has a particular interest in the relationship of politics and popular culture.

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* I should add that Zsa Zsa did star in the camp classic *Queen of Outer Space*, my favorite in a long line of cheesy late '50s sci-fi flicks involving romantic male astronaut / girl-alien encounters, which has to count for something.

It's a spiritual message. And, forgive me, but I think it's almost a deeply religious message on a very personal level. –Joe Eszterhaus on *Showgirls*

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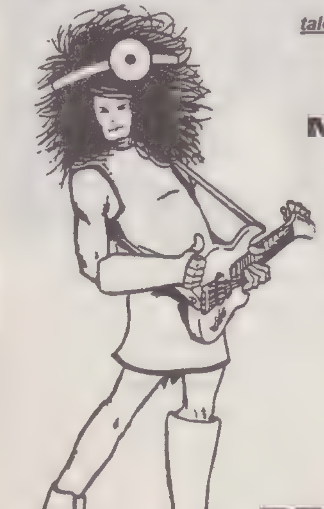

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by Brian Doherty

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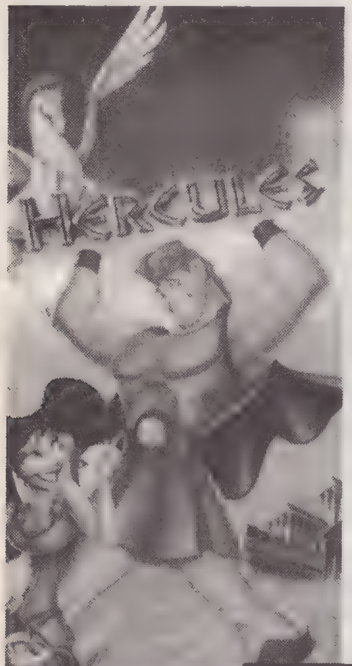


(ANCIENT)

How many characters from pre-Xtian history still have their own TV show today? **Hercules** was the original Celebrity, and he understood the score: Through his feats of derring-do, he became considered, essentially, a God. At this point, his celebrity overshadows such minor questions as whether he actually existed at all.

5TH CENTURY BC

The first non-regal profession that promised celebrity in your own time was **athletics** in ancient Greece .

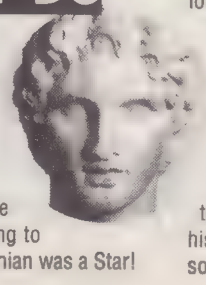
Greek portraiture makes a step toward Celebrity worship rather than God worship as image styles start becoming more realistic and based on actual living persons rather than traditional rules about the appearance of a god.

The Pharoahs had it right: Even historically minor figures like **Tutankhamen** are almost universally known millenia later because of his obsessive monument-building and wealth-amassing. Will **Donald Trump** be the most remembered figure of our time?

The Church of **Elvis** is nothing new. Ancient Greek **Euphemerus** writes philosophical novel revealing that the gods were no more than human beings about whom myths and stories were oft-told.

In the early days of **Buddhism**, before they began using representative imagery, the burial mound was the only place for veneration - celebrity only came with death.

4TH CENTURY BC



Alexander the Great could be considered the world's first Famous person – combining unprecedented deeds of impressive scale with a keen sense that none of it mattered if people weren't properly impressed. They were; many future tyrants and conquerors were just trying to out-Alexander Alexander. The Macedonian was a Star!

Seeking celebrity through infamy has a long history as well: A common anecdote (possibly apocraphal) has an early Trench Coat Mafia-type named **Herostratus** burning down the Temple of Diana at Ephesus on the day Alexander the Great was born, just so people would notice him. As wags centuries later would point out, we know his name, but not the name of the person who designed the Temple.

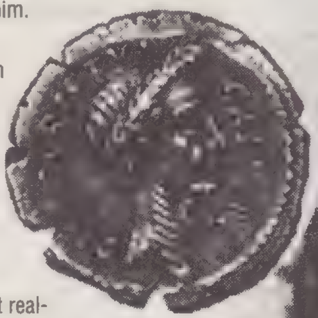
Even for learned men, love of fame is the last thing to be given up. –Tacitus (AD c. 56-after 117)

1ST CENTURY BC

The whole Roman system was built on Celebrity, on acts of public glory, all for the benefit of the State. Private lives were considered unimportant; public display in the name of public glory was all.

In Ancient Rome, the alliance of politics and show biz began as Roman war hero **Pompey** (a contemporary of Julius Caesar's) built his own theater in Rome – beginning a linkage between actors and political leaders that continued through the history of Rome and to this day. (See Streisand and Clinton.)

Roman orator **Cicero** smartly made a habit of writing and publishing his words (even if he never actually orated them), allowing his reputation as a fancy talker to survive to this day, while other Romans, who for all we know could yak rings around the guy, languish in relative obscurity. His own words contain many a worried reference to how posterity would remember him.



Julius Caesar ups the ante in fame by becoming not only political ruler of Rome, but by rearranging the entire calendar to his own liking, adding two months that even now remind us of him (July, for Julius, and August, for Augustus).

Julius successor, **Augustus**, first realizes the power of sloganeering for fame, adding his favorite catchphrases to all the Roman coins that bear his name.

1ST CENTURY AD

Decadent Roman emperor **Caligula** lived out the ultimate dream of Celebrity, attempting to abolish any fame other than his own, allowing no statue of anyone other than himself to be erected without his permission, and replacing heads on old Greek statues with his.

Jesus is probably the most famous person in human history. Early Christians tried to take half the fun out of fame through the Iconoclast controversy – a fight over whether reproduced images of **Jesus** or other holy figures were blasphemous or not.

Many famous figures of history were not necessarily well-known in their own day, particularly before the invention of mass communication. Often, contemporary writers and historians rescue figures from history and grant them an eternal Celebrity they never enjoyed during life.

Medieval art struck a blow against fame with its lack of personality and character while portraying individuals – most medieval artists are themselves anonymous, and hardly anyone wrote in autobiographical style. Medieval times were truly a dark age for celebrity, the occasional legend of **King Arthur** or the like aside. Politics was the sole hotbed of personal notoriety.

13TH CENTURY AD

St. Francis of Assisi won enormous fame for preaching the rejection of all material aims and worldly vanity. This oldie-but-goody tactic still works today.

14TH CENTURY AD

Art styles began to change with the rise of cities, as a new sense of individuality – rather than merely playing prescribed roles in a medievel or church-ruled social order – arises: the heroic individual.

Dante's INFERNO cements in western literature the idea that Fame is the most important thing – the characters he meets on his journey through the underworld tend to be most interested in how their reputations have fared in the living memories of people on Earth.

People complain about contemporary journalism and literature being too celebrity-obsessed – one of the lesser-known works of English literary Father Chaucer was **THE HOUSE OF FAME**, a long, metaphor-filled dissertation on the topic that has always been a prime concern of thinking men.

15TH CENTURY AD

The rise of **portraiture** as an art style to glorify the wealthy artistic patron and his family provides a whole new nexus for keeping one's image and memory alive for posterity.

16TH CENTURY AD

Copper engraving techniques become popular, helping the spread of fame through the spread of reproducible images of people.

Popular portraiture, still mostly the province of the wealthy, begins the Robin Leachesque technique of the rich to become famous just by being rich.

Royal portraiture becomes a key part of the propaganda efforts of kings – an almost modern consciousness about image control begins to develop.

Thomas à Kempis becomes first international best-selling author with his **IMITATION OF CHRIST** – a book of spiritual advice the likes of which still fill bestseller lists today.

Erasmus becomes first truly contemporary famous writer, negotiating agreements with publishers that specified author's fees.

The Catholic Church begins the practice that creates fame-through-infamy, or the forbidden-fruit syndrome – bringing lots of heretical books to the attention of those who might not otherwise have noticed them.

Popular theater in England rises to enormous cultural and even political importance; but personal fame is slow to come to individual authors, with **Shakespeare**'s name not even appearing on his plays 'til late in his career. Like today's Hollywood, the actors were considered more important.

I got married when Christ died. Wasn't he thirty-three when he died? We both suffered. –James Woods, on his divorce

17TH CENTURY AD

Milton's poem **PARADISE LOST** portrays Jesus as the first man to reject fame because it only means the approbation of the masses – who are, of course, asses. Or, in Milton's more poetic words, the people are "but a herd confus'd/A miscellaneous rabble, who extol/Things vulgar, and well weigh'd, scare worth the praise?"

Oliver Cromwell leads a revolution that results in the beheading of **King Charles I** of England. Cromwell refuses to be crowned, preferring to be famous purely as Cromwell, himself, then as just another in a long line of kings.

Louis XIV of France develops a particularly theatrical sense of living the public role of the monarch; he succeeds in making himself the most memorable and famous of French kings to this day, even overshadowing his poor successor Louis XVI, who at least had the distinction of being beheaded in the French revolution.

18TH CENTURY AD

With the passage of the aristocratic age, men of often humble means with no direct association with politics achieve fame, and the age of the Celebrity Intellectual begins with such figures as **Voltaire**, **Diderot**, **David Hume**, and **Jean Jacques Rousseau**.

Rousseau begins the long tradition of the Intellectual Celebrity attacking the Entertainment Celebrity with long perorations on the idiocy and emptiness of actors.

Boswell, author of ***Life of Johnson***, celebrates himself as the First Fanboy with his declaration that "I am not a great man, but I have an enthusiastic love of great men, and I derive a kind of glory from it."

America celebrates itself by designing a flag in which each constituent state is represented by its own star. See, we are all stars here in the U.S.A!

The notion that Everyman can aspire to celebrity gains currency as non-aristocrats like **George Washington** and **Napoleon** dominate the world stage.

19TH CENTURY AD

Beau Brummell becomes the world's first Celebrity fashion designer. Lord Byron, most popular poet of his day, says that the three greatest men of the 19th century were Brummell, himself, and Napoleon – in that order.

Poet **Keats**, peeved at what he sees as the vain fame-mongering of many of his poetic brethren like Byron and Wordsworth, compares them invidiously to flowers, which "would lose their beauty were they to throng into the highway crying out, 'Admire me I am a violet! – Dote upon me I am a primrose!'"

The figure of the non-aristocratic Dandy arises, bringing Fabulousness to the realm of the everyday.

Founding Father **Benjamin Rush** gripes to John Adams that the American Revolution gave all its fame to one man, George Washington.

Abraham Lincoln makes going for his official portrait one of his first official acts; he is the first Image Celebrity president, carefully crafting his inevitable uniform of dark coat and pants and stovepipe hat for deliberate effect.

Photography spreads; the means of portraiture production and flooding the world with one's own image fall into even more hands.

Theodore Roosevelt, most famous American president since Lincoln, fakes a photograph of himself allegedly capturing a crew of thieves who had stolen his boat.

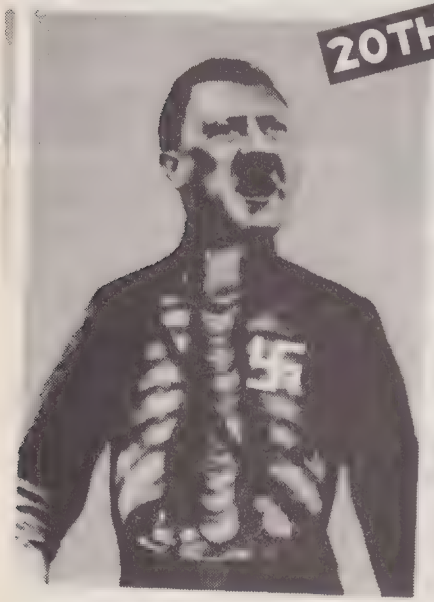
P.T. Barnum becomes first of a breed of celebrities who becomes world famous not for himself per se, but for focusing attention on the talents and oddities of others – the first Celebrity talent scout, in a sense.

International rivalry over whether America or Britain's most famous Shakespearean actor was better, resulted in a riot when both were performing in the same place, in which 30 people died.

H.M. Stanley becomes one of the first celebrity journalists with his search through Africa for the "lost" (he wasn't really lost to anyone who cared) explorer **David Livingstone**.

Oil magnate **John D. Rockefeller** and steel magnate **Andrew Carnegie** become the first businessman celebrities in America.

20TH CENTURY AD



As mass media spreads, few seeking fame think of posterity, as did the ancients; an obsession with maximum notoriety now prevails. Finally, the technological means exist for everybody on Earth to know someone else's name or face.

The public relations industry develops to manage celebrity's fame.

The tabloid press, obsessed with celebrity gossip, arises.

The longevity of fame also shortens considerably; the likes of Alexander were known through history; many movie or pop music stars have fame lives that barely last more than a year or so.

Hitler becomes a stylish celebrity dictator, relying on master image-manipulators like Goebbels and Lili Reifenstein to cement his notoriety.

Charles Lindberg becomes the most famous man of his time for being the first man to fly solo across the Atlantic. His fame led to problems, as all the tragic stories tell us – his child was kidnapped and murdered in a famous case (which is still hotly debated to this day). He lost favor with the masses by sticking firmly to his anti-interventionist stance in the days leading up to World War II, and his friendliness with the Germany Reich made it all the more easy for the world to think him an Anti-Semite. Within five years he went from the most celebrated man in the world to the most hated. And with everything else he's famous for most have forgotten he helped invent the artificial heart.

If I was a Jewish girl in Hitler's day, I would have become his girlfriend. After ten days in bed, he would come to my way of thinking. –Yoko Ono on how she would have stopped Hitler

Howard Hughes achieves enormous celebrity by refusing to let anyone see him. **J.D. Salinger** and **Thomas Pynchon** emulate him to good effect, achieving fame far beyond their merits by staying out of sight.

20TH CENTURY AD

The advent of film makes the image of specific persons universal, speeding and extending the process of fame in its most basic sense: widespread recognition of a person by sight alone. Television brings the process into almost everyone's home. Celebrity will never be the same.

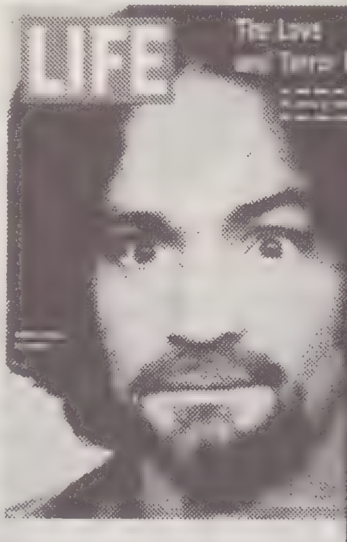
Electronic amplification and reproduction of sound makes the pop singer one of the most effective celebrities of the century, particularly to teens, thought to be uniquely vulnerable to making idols of entertainers. The careers of **Sinatra, Presley, the Beatles,** and **Michael Jackson** are among the more lasting of these celebrity phenomena's. But such celebrity is not guaranteed to last – try to remember Frankie Laine, Shaun Cassidy, New Kids on the Block…

The celebrity machine creates valuable new professions, like "**paparazzi**" – an elegant Italian term for camera-wielding stalkers – who make their living chasing celebs into **Princess Di** car wrecks and hoping someone like Alec Baldwin will smash their face in so they can retire.

Los Angeles, world center of fame, incubates a hideous new growth in the celebrity culture: weirdos who become famous just for wanting to be famous, from **Angelyne** to **Melrose Larry Green** to that guy who drives around in a car begging you to cast him in your film.

MTV and the Internet bring the dream of the universal celebrity Everyman to its apotheosis, with shows like **THE REAL WORLD** (would be more real if the participants were chosen by lottery and not self-selected out of a group of show-biz-wannabee freaks) and Internet innovations like Jennicam, the much-emulated broadcasting of personal bedroom scenes to anyone with Web access.

Talk shows of the Morton Downey/Jerry Springer variety encourage everyday folk to (usually) fake tawdry details of their lives for an hour or so of fake celebrity, at least among whichever of their friends they can get to watch it. Call-in talk radio grows in the '90s, providing a similarly faux bit of celebrity to callers who, though no one would ever know it, can themselves bask in the knowledge that their words filled the airwaves, and the ears of tens of thousands of strangers.


LIFE
The Love and Terror Cult

Manson & gang might have been most famous for stalking and killing celebrities, **Mark David Chapman** the most famous for killing a celebrity because of his love for another celebrity, but blowing them all out of the water, **O.J. Simpson** becomes the most famous man alive for being a celebrity accused of murdering two people.

While true celebrity tends to be reserved for only a handful of figures per sport – we all know **Michael Jordan** and **Dennis Rodman**, but how many non-fans could name 10 other basketball players? The huge salaries for all of them provide that cold comfort for the not-quite-famous: wealth.

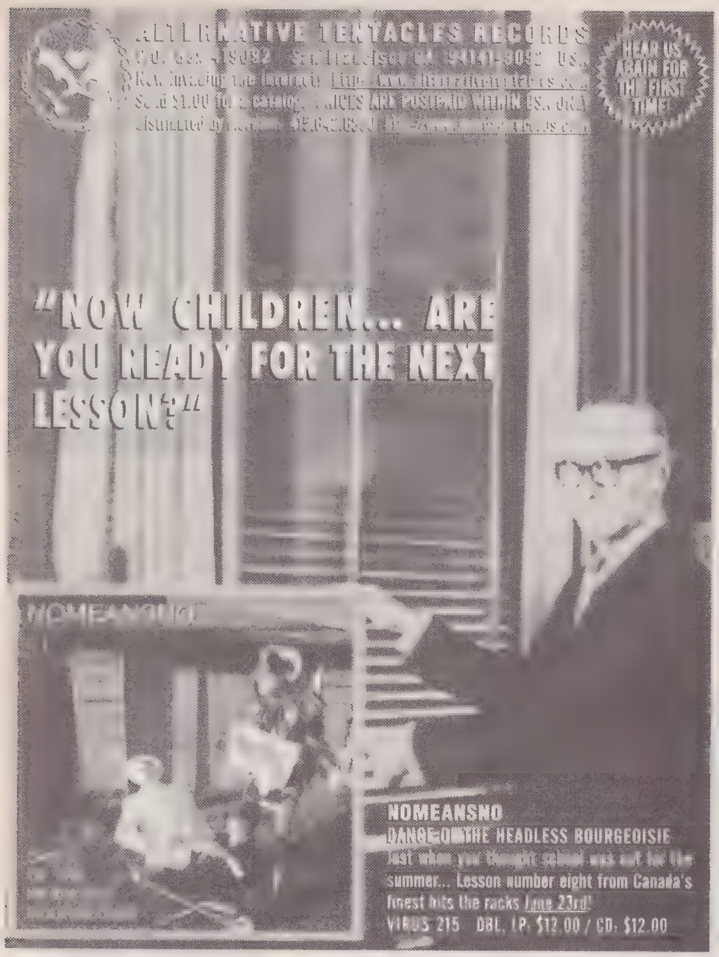
The dark side of fame: dying young guarantees greater celebrity than living to embarrass yourself would. **James Dean, Marilyn Monroe, Jim Morrison, John Belushi** all are winners in this game; **Chris Farley**, alas, hasn't yet become a constellation after his Belushiesque death (and life).

In complete contradistinction to the middle ages, autobiography becomes almost the only mode of writing – every figure of even minor public distinction, from **Chuck Barris** to **Sonny Bono** to **Grace Slick**, gets one published by major publishers – and even in fiction, the thinly disguised autobiography is the dominant form.

Religious leaders take lessons in celebrity from entertainment-world figures as **The Pope** does "world tours" with corporate sponsorship, sells memorabilia from soap to t-shirts, and issues commemorative CDs.

Brian Doherty lives in Los Angeles, where he is writing a book on the history and ideas of the American Libertarian Movement. He has written for *Spin, the Weekly Standard, National Review, Mother Jones, the San Francisco Chronicle,* suck.com, and dozens of other magazines and newspapers.

I would like to meet Mikhail Gorbachev. I think it would be great to sit in a room with him…and try to make peace. –Donny Wahlberg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Grandpa on the Rails

By (Grandson) Jeff Fox

When I started working on the railroad, I was working for a milk company, Borden's, delivering milk (with the use of a horse) in Trenton, New Jersey, and things were starting to go bad because of the war. They were taking all the cream and butter and things like that we had to sell. That meant we would only have milk left, which wouldn't make any profit for anybody. And instead of daily deliveries to the houses, they were going on every other day, and people just didn't have big enough ice boxes or refrigerators in those days to go on every other day. And then they were talking about making deliveries every third day. So, I decided, "Well, this is the time to get out of here."

I went over and tried to get a job on the railroad. I figured the railroad was the business to be in these times. I had heard from one of my milk customers that they hire on the fifth floor in [the] Jersey City [station]. When I got on the train to Jersey City to try to get a job, it was the first time in years that I rode on the train.

On the way over I met another fella that was trying to get a job on the railroad. We got off the train in Jersey City and there must have been 2,000 people in line! I says to a guy standing there, "What's this line?"

Grandpop standing behind his house on Concord Av. in Mercerville, NJ, dressed for his first day of work as a ticket collector, 1943.

"Oh," he says, "we're going to get jobs on the railroad."

I said, "This line wouldn't get into the office for five days, let alone get a job." Finally I says to the kid, "Come on with me."

So, we went over and we walked right in the front door. I knew they were hiring on the fifth floor, so we started walking towards the elevator. The guard in there says, "No, you gotta get to the end of the line."

"Not us," I said, "we work for the railroad. We have to go up to the sixth floor to see Mr. Matthews," which is a name I just picked out of the air.

"Oh," he says "Oh, okay."

So, we get on the elevator. We're going up and I'm making a lot of bugaboo speeches to this other fella about "Let me do the talking" and all that. We get dropped off at the sixth floor and then the elevator went down.

As soon as it came back, we took it down to the fifth floor. But it was one of those elevators that didn't have an enclosure. Everything was open. It was all lattice-work made out of metal. Just as we got to the top of the fifth floor I heard the guy say, "I need ten freight brakemen for Trenton."

We wanted to be firemen so we could be engineers and I says to the kid, "How about a freight brakeman's job? You want that?"

He says, "Let's go."

So, we went in and the guy was just starting to sit down. He says, "Who are you?"

I says, "We're two of the freight brakemen you wanted for Trenton."

"How the hell'd you get up here so fast?"

"Well," I says, "we were going to hire out as firemen, but they don't have any openings, so I heard you say you needed freight brakemen for Trenton."

"Oh, O.K.," he says. "Sit down and fill out the application." So, we were the first two hired that day.

That was in 1941, in freight service. You had to go in freight service before you could go into passenger service. To get into passenger service, they took freight brakemen according to seniority. Well, the older men didn't want to go into passenger service, so that left it wide open for the younger element. They were rough, crude guys in those days. They didn't want to get dressed up and stuff like that. Of course, me, always being in a job where I had to be dressed up, it didn't make any difference.

Well, I guess I was in freight service in March of '41 and then I transferred to passenger about I guess about August or September, when the first names came up that they wanted men for passenger service. So, that's how I got into it.

The youngest men got assigned to undesirable jobs, the ones that nobody else wanted. Because everyone wanted a regular job close to home and they didn't want to work what they called "the extra list." I got assigned to Chestnut Hill, which made me leave the house at about quarter of five in the morning. And I had to catch a train out of Trenton and dead ahead to North Philadelphia, get off there and catch another train to Chestnut Hill, and then work up there all day long, I finally got home at about 6:30, 7 o' clock at night. And that was a real paying job. I made $6.97 for that, a day, for that long of a day. You could hardly eat out. The first raise we got, boy, we thought we were in heaven. We got raised from $6.97 to $7.11.

But then, as they started hiring more men, you exercised your seniority to try to get near home like at Trenton, but there were too many in Trenton that were ahead of me. So, I had to work the extra list out of New York, because the extra list out of Philadelphia was all filled up. So, I worked out of New York until I built up enough seniority to hold myself a regular job.

The first celebrity on the train that comes to mind is **Wilt Chamberlain**, the basketball player. He used to get on in New York when he was on the 76ers and go to Philly. He would always come up on me from an angle and tap me on the shoulder when I was loading the train because he wanted to know where the parlor cars were. The parlor car is the better part of the train. They only had 28 seats in the car and they had an attendant in there that took care of you and made sure you got your seat and he sold maybe drinks or sandwiches in there. You got just a little more attention. It's like first class on an airline.

His legs were so big, he couldn't sit in the coaches. The seats were too close together. So, he would always go in the parlor car, where he would have more room.

Anyhow, when he touched me on the shoulder and I turned around, I was looking at his solar plexus and, boy, my head would snap up and he would stand there and laugh like hell. He'd say, "You know what I'm looking for."

I'd say, "Yeah, last car on the train." But he was a real nice guy.

above: Grandpop (right) with another trainman, Harvey Wardell in 1952. *right:* Posing with fellow trainman Tom McLaughlin (right), 1978, on his last day of work.

I had ball players like **Roy Campanella** and **Jackie Robinson** when they were playing with the **Dodgers**. They used to ride the train from New York to Philadelphia. This was right after **Jackie Robinson** broke the barrier. I guess it was **Larry Doby** first, and then Jackie Robinson, but Jackie Robinson was the one that was most publicized.

I think Jackie Robinson was a little shy with white people because the other teammates over there, they treated him like dirt. But he just made it that he was going to stay. And Roy Campanella was a real likable guy, too.

Then I had **Stan Musial** on the train one day and he was going from Philadelphia to New York. I guess they were probably going to play the Dodgers from Philadelphia and I was talking to him.

I said, "Stan, you know, you're a nice guy. You never seem to get into any arguments. You ever have any trouble with the umpires or anything like that? The other guys are always screaming and fighting and kicking dirt on 'em."

He said, "No, I only had one."

Now, I don't know whether I remember the name, but I thought it was **Dusty Bodges**. But I wouldn't say that for sure.

He said, "Yeah, I was up to bat and he called a third strike on me. I just turned around and looked at him and said, 'Dusty, I think you missed that one.'" And he said Bodges just looked back at him and said, "Stan, if I had a bat, I wouldn't have."

So, that was my thing with Stan Musial.

Players would take the train to games because you could get to New York faster by train than you could by going to the airport.

Then I had some football players, like **Johnny Unitas**. He was the quarterback for the **Baltimore Colts**. And **Jim Katcavage**. He was a defensive back for the **New York Giants**. **Emelen Tunnel** and **Ken Kavanaugh** played for the Giants, and they were later coaches.

This Emelen Tunnel, I think he had records with the Giants that still stand. He was real nice. He used to ride many times with me from New York to Philadelphia and we'd sit down and have conversations, and the same with Kavanaugh. And he always liked to go into Philadelphia and have a drink after we got in. Boy, he always wanted to buy.

This Katcavage, he was a monster, they usually all were in those days. They were like 6' 4" or 6' 5", 250, 260 pounds. Katcavage was telling me one time they went to training camp and they were all there, Katcavage, Emelen Tunnel and Kavanaugh. Emelen was lying on a cot, resting between workouts. He says to Katcavage, "Come here, Kat." Kat came over, and he just said, "Lean down here." Kat didn't know what was going on. Tunnel jumped up real quick and grabbed a hold of him and he says, "When I die, you come to see me in my coffin and I'm gonna jump up and grab you just like this!"

And you know what? Emelen died, and Katcavage told me, "You know, I couldn't go near the coffin."

I says, "Aw, come on Kat."

"No, no really, I couldn't."

These guys were monsters. I mean, they could break telephone poles in half. But he says, "No, I couldn't go near the coffin, I was afraid he was gonna grab me."

We used to have the Giants on the train a lot back in the early stages of the team. They'd eat in the diner car. Well, of course, everybody got steaks back in those days. Kavanaugh told me to go in and ask the chef what he put on the steaks. He said he always cooked on the grill and he could never find out what in the hell he did with the steaks to make 'em taste so good.

The chef said they would mix parsley and butter together and stir it up and let it sit overnight and then the next day, just paint 'em with that.

Kavanaugh had a funny story on the train. They went to Alabama and he wanted to sign up this big guy, he must have been enormous. So, he said, "You ever see anybody put a whole banana in their mouth at one time?"

I said, "Maybe."

He said, "Sideways?"

And Emelen Tunnel went down to Alabama or Mississippi to sign up a couple bruisers. Down there, in those days, everybody made moonshine. They went back in the woods and they all had their bottle of moonshine. They had a big container. Instead of each one drinking their own moonshine, they just poured it into this container, and if they wanted it, they'd open a spigot and drain it out.

And on top of that, their favorite thing to cook was possum. "Man," he says, "Jack, moonshine and possum? Oh boy, I had to eat it. We did sign the two guys, but can you ever imagine moonshine and possum together?"

I had another fella, whose name was **Dick Maylander**. He was All-American end for Virginia. He worked in later times for Time-Life in New York. I guess he was an advertising man. I stayed friends with him for years and years and years. Boy, if you had him on the train, you never had a problem.

I had one incident where a fella wanted to pay the bill, so he gives me a hundred-dollar bill. I said, "I can't change a hundred-dollar bill. I'll keep it and the company will send you your change."

Oh, man, he didn't want any parts of that, but he wanted to ride for free. I guess this must have been something he'd do all the time. Maylander was in the car and he heard the conversation going on. So, he came up and said, "What's the problem?"

I said, "This guy's got a hundred dollar bill and I can't change it." The fare might have been four or five dollars.

So Maylander said, "I can change it."

I don't think the guy wanted that, so Maylander says, "Do you have any identification?"

He says, "Why do you want that, sir?"

"Because this hundred dollar bill better SPEND. If it doesn't SPEND, I think you've had about as long a life on this Earth as you've ever had."

You could see the whites of his eyes come up and he wrote down his name and address down and changed his bill.

Maylander was just one of those sportsmen who could have played four or five sports. Everybody knew him. He was always a real good person on the train and the other guys all took care of him. He was one that always made good friends.

And then there was **Jack Whitaker**, who was a sports commentator. Nine times out of ten, he'd forget his wallet. So, we'd give him a slip and then the company would pay his bill, but he was a real nice guy.

I had **Joe Louis** and **Ice Williams** on the train. Ice Williams was a lightweight champion; he lived here in Trenton. Joe Louis, he was a real nice guy. Boy, you could talk to him and he'd hold a conversation with you.

But poor Joe Louis, he never had an education, you know. Somebody found him and made a champion out of him. Christ, they robbed that poor bastard blind, those managers and all that stuff. I think there was a time when he owed the government, oh, I don't know how much money in taxes. They knew what had happened to him, and instead of putting him in jail for income taxes, they said they'd let him work it out. But I think what happened was that they forgave him because they knew that the other guys were the ones that got his money.

And then there was another champion that used to ride with me, too. His name was **Gus Lesnovitch**. I think he was a light heavyweight. He had a funny saying. He'd say, "Hey, my name is Gus Lesnovitch, does that ring a bell?" Sure as hell does, Gus.

I had this guy they used to call **"Two-Ton" Tony Gallento**. He was a fighter. He was just a bruiser. They were guys who fought and I guess they could take a real good punch. He'd run around the ring after people, Christ, just wanting to swing at 'em and knock 'em down. He was never what you'd really call a great fighter.

On the train out of New York, when you went into Princeton, you got off at Princeton Junction. And we used to punch the ticket, so you'd have a ticket to ride from Princeton Junction to Princeton.

Some fella got off the train at Princeton Junction and went on up to Princeton. He lost his ticket, I don't know where the hell he put it.

The kid that was working up at the Princeton branch was complaining about it: "Christ, I think mostly all of the stupid people in the world live in Princeton. The dumb bastards, you give them a ticket and put it in their hand and they can't even take care of it."

And the guy he was talking about was **Robert Oppenheimer**.

So, boy, we all got a big charge out of that. The conductor said, "You know who the hell you were talking to?"

He says, "I don't care who the hell I'm talking to, he's a dumb jackass. Can't take care of a ticket..."

This one guy's name was **Hal Pappitch** – he was the other trainman on the job – and he says to **Frank Perdue**, the chicken guy, "I'd like to try your chickens, maybe you could send me a case of your oven roasters and I'll try them and I can let you know how they are."

Boy, this Frank Perdue had some mouth on him. Oh, god, those words he used, you wouldn't put in print. I was in the middle of the car and Frank says to him, "Why you f***in' cheap bastard," or something like that. "You can't go to the store and buy your own goddamned chickens? You gotta ask me for a case of 'em?" Hal says, "You go shit in your hat."

Needless to say, he never got the chickens.

Well, this Pappitch, no matter what you said to him, you couldn't irritate him. He'd just sit there and laugh at you.

I had **Ralph Bellamy**, the actor, on the train once. He was kind of lost because he had come down the back stairway. He came down and wanted to know if the train was going to Philadelphia. And I said "Yes."

He said something about "How do I get on the train?"

I said, "Right there, where the doors are open."

He just looked at me and then started laughing. All the doors are open and everyone else is getting on, but he wanted to know how to get on the train! But he was a real nice guy.

Boris Karloff, I had him on the train one night. He was going from Philadelphia to New York for some reason. And he was sitting in the last seat on the right side in the coaches.

I said: "Mr. Karloff, what are you sitting here for? In the middle of the train it rides much nicer. You're riding over top of the wheels."

He says: "No, I'll stay here. I'm by myself. People scare me."

I said: "People scare you? All you have to do is look at people and they could have a stroke or heart attack!"

And **Nancy Walker**, she used to do the commercials for Bounty towels and used to play in a series on TV. Boy, she was a peanut, kind of skinny-like. When she said something to somebody, she would raise her arm up like she was going to punch 'em. She came down one day to get on the train and she started to ask something and I raised my arm at her, like she always used to do, and boy, did she ever laugh.

I used to have **Frank Sinatra**, when he was young, real young, when they used to wear their topcoat over their shoulders and never put their arms in the sleeves. He was playing in Philadelphia at the Fox or the Earl, one of the really big theaters. He was allright. He was a little piss-ant, too. He wanted everything for nothing. If you didn't take their ticket, it would make them very happy. Christ, a ticket then was only two or three dollars, but I guess they just wanted to be known more than anything else. He always traveled with bodyguards, 'cause the women would kill him, they'd ruin him. He was up and coming. He felt he was good and he flaunted it. The girls went for him the way they went for the Beatles.

Then **Lucille Ball** and **Mickey Rooney** were on once. They were doing some kind of promotion shows for war bonds or whatever, and boy, he is some peanut, Mickey Rooney. He was in those days, anyway. And Lucille was a bright redhead. She was really nice. Mickey was nice, too. They were stars; they didn't want to be bothered.

I had **Dick Clark** and **Ernie Kovacs**. Ernie Kovacs lived right down the street from us when we lived in Mercerville in 1950. He lived a couple blocks up the street. Sometimes you'd go into the deli and he'd be in there and he'd talk to you, it was no problem.

And Dick Clark, oh god, he used to have the young girls. They used to follow him all the time.

Then I had **Nat King Cole**. He was a great guy. He used to travel with his wife. Just like in his pictures, he was always smiling and happy.

I had **Ed McMahon**. He was with the **Johnny Carson** show. He used to talk all the time. He said Johnny Carson would let you get laughs. He said when you were on talk shows with certain people, there was no way you could get a laugh above them. Johnny Carson always felt as though if you can get a laugh out of someone, great, because he always got his share.

And **William Shatner**, the both of them used to ride from Philadelphia to New York. Shatner, he was another one. He appeared like he would be as big as I am or bigger. And he's a little runt, too.

Then I had **Liz Taylor** on the train one time. When we were going

in his youth, and then someone jumped higher than he did and people acted funny toward him all his life. They couldn't forget and he couldn't jump any higher. –Richard Shattuck

Grandpop retires. Saying goodbye at the end of his last day working on the railroad, 1978.

from New York to Washington, she got on down above Baltimore, Maryland. She was married to **Warner**; I guess he was a Senator or something. He had a horse farm. I guess she was riding a horse or something and she fell off. This day was a few days after she had hurt her back. We took her into Washington and we're standing on the platform to get a real good look at her when she came up. And this lady was standing there and she says, "Why is she limping?" I said, "Well, she hurt her back, I guess, riding a horse with Warner, I don't know." She said, "Warner, isn't that the young man?" I said, "Yeah, he's younger than she is." The woman laughed and said, "Uh-huh. She never got that bad back from riding a horse!" That was at least 25 years ago, so [Liz Taylor] was a little bit older, but she was still very pretty. Well, she got the men. I don't know how she got them but she got them all the time.

The nicest person ever was **Mary Tyler Moore** – she was great, she was perfect. It would be like talking to your sister: no matter what you asked her, she was just great. She never pushed to get something just a little bit better, no matter what you said to her, that was just fine; a real nice person.

I never asked these people for autographs because I just didn't want to bother them. If somebody saw you getting an autograph and they knew it was a celebrity of some kind, then everybody would be up after it. You weren't an autograph hound in those days. You just shook hands with them and that was it.

Working on the train was a prestige job back then. They wouldn't take you unless you stood at least 5' 9" or 5' 10". They stood you up against the wall and measured you. And back before I started, if the conductor didn't like your looks, he'd say, "I want somebody else," and they gave him somebody else.

And when you worked a high-class train like the Broadway Limited that went to Chicago and places like that, if you didn't come down dressed, polished, forget it. You just didn't get the job. I mean, shoes were shined, buttons were all nice silver and cleaned up, your badge was shined.

Some of the guys that work the train now don't even have a hat on, some of them have beards, some of them have sunglasses, some of them have jewelry hanging out. All the guys I worked with who are still working, they just can't wait to get out. We all took pride in our work.

* * * * *

***Jeff Fox** is the editor and publisher of **Barracuda** magazine.*

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He was going to be famous, he was going to be the dark swift figure with twinkling feet that is seen in the Pathé Newsreels galloping across chalk-stripes in the terrific, mob-swarmed, autumn-dark stadiums of American as jubilance strides across the land –Jack Kerouac, *The Town and the City*

FATHER OF THE CELEBRITY

AN INTERVIEW WITH **MICHAEL HOROWITZ**

BY KAREN ENG

The most ironic thing about interviewing Michael Horowitz for the Celebrity issue is – despite the constant media hum around them – neither Timothy Leary nor Winona Ryder ever impressed me as indelibly as the book *Shaman Woman, Mainline Lady,* an anthology of writings on women's drug experiences edited by Michael and Cynthia Palmer. It was 1990, and a coworker at the bookstore where I worked had brought it in especially for me to see. In the basement during my break, I leafed through. It was fat in the hands, beautiful to look at, and full of writings on a fascinating subject by women I admire.

Michael and Cindy are Winona Ryder's parents, and while most probably know Timothy Leary was Winona's godfather, you might not have known that Michael was Timothy's archivist and bibliographer. I myself didn't make the connection between *Shaman Woman* and the Horowitzes until very recently. And before I knew *any* of these things about Michael, he told me *he's* a fan of *Ben Is Dead!* Just goes to show that who (or what) you confer celebrity status upon is relative...so to speak.

Well, Michael insists he's an uncelebrity, just someone with a keen sense of organization whose responsibilities toward Tim and Winona have included, to a great degree, archiving and cataloguing stuff about them – he's probably the only person in the world to be archivist for two famous people, he says. He also runs Flashback Books, a mail-order service dealing in rare books mainly about entheogens. Cindy, the true film-buff of the family who influenced Winona's love of movies, is a video artist and photographer. They've often been associated with the hippies and Beats of '50s and '60s counterculture, and it's been publicized that they raised their kids on a commune. But how did it all come about? And what's it like to be in the center of the celebrity whirlpool, being the crucial link between two 20th-century icons from completely different generations? What's it like to be the *Mom and Dad* of one? Michael graciously invited me over (actually, I invited myself, but he let me in), poured us some wine, and told me all about it one late Sunday evening as the cat looked on.

Michael: People who were part of the Sixties counterculture felt like celebrities themselves – barefoot kings and queens in our stylish vintage clothes. So we're not so stunned in their presence. We're now looked upon as the self-indulgent, narcissistic generation – but actually we felt special, because we were exploring new mind realms and new lifestyles. And I think it made us kind of sophisticated about the whole notion of celebrity.

Cindy and I met in the early '60s. We were both English majors...our introduction into psychedelics was through literature. We read Huxley, Watts. We actually *used The Psychedelic Experience* by Leary, Metzner, and Alpert as a trip guide. And we learned about the occult, esoteric traditions, Eastern mysticism, and their influence on culture and religion, traditions of indigenous peoples, how many centuries people have been using these drugs, peyote, mushrooms, and so on. So our fascination and interest in altered states of consciousness was always kind of as historians and intellectuals.

Being readers and literary people we started collecting books... We started a library in 1970 of drug literature, which became the largest such library in the world – the Fitz Hugh Ludlow Memorial Library. It led us to publishing anthologies of writings by famous literary people. Cindy and I edited a book of all Huxley's writings on psychedelics and visionary experience [*Moksha*]. A few years later we published *Shaman Woman, Mainline Lady*, an anthology of mostly famous women's writings on their drug experiences. And I co-wrote the *Encyclopedia of Recreational Drugs* that *High Times* published. So we kind of made a career out of our knowledge – but of course we did not become famous or make any money. Counterculture financial success was in drug dealing and rock 'n roll, not books.

Along the way, Timothy Leary gave us his archives to look after. We met him while he was in prison, in 1970. He kept careful archives of all his research – really the most important archives of psychedelic research in existence. He was planning to escape and was worried they would be seized by the government – and they eventually *were*. That's how we became involved with him. I later became editor on some of his books, his bibliographer and archivist.

Actually, this connects with Winona. She was born in October 1971...Tim was living in exile in Switzerland. I went over and visited him – Winona was three months old, and I brought him a picture. He was thrilled for me. He'd just become a grandfather, so we were both celebrating. I asked him to be her godfather, and he said sure....

But he didn't meet her 'til she was seven. We were living on a commune at that time in Mendocino County. Now, he'd already been recaptured, brought back, served time; there was a grand jury investigation – I was involved with that. After he was free he came to visit at the commune. He and Winona really connected. She was seven and asked him if he was a "mad scientist" like people said. Everyone went "Oh my god!" but Tim was charmed.

We were like family with Tim. Through Tim, we met people like Allen Ginsberg and Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Robert Anton Wilson. We were close to all of them. And they all knew the children too.

Karen: So your work was parallel to Tim's? And then he asked you – since you were good at cataloging information – to work with him?

Yes, I founded the library and was a drug historian and a writer on the subject, and Tim was

I would rather have men ask, after I am dead, why I have no monument than why I have one. –Cato the Elder the latest famous person involved with drugs, perhaps more famous than anyone had ever been in that regard. Famous *and* infamous. It was natural that we would meet. And he loved my information. He loved to learn of where he stood in the history of drug use and literature and writing and advocacy... So that was a real bond between us, our mutual interest in this field.

His message has been so distorted. Hopefully history will show that he was actually much more of a shaman. He was very intelligent about drugs and didn't advocate them blindly and willfully. It was really the backlash that caused the problems. The media sensationalized him and the rising drug use, like it always does. In a way, he played into it, being a fighter.

> IT'S TRUE THEY OVERSHADOW YOU. ON THE OTHER HAND, NOT EVERYBODY IS CUT OUT TO BE A CELEBRITY. IN A WAY YOU'RE GLAD... THEY'RE OUT THERE ON THE FRONT LINES BEING FAMOUS.

When Winona was just starting out as an actress and just starting to get some press, the media glommed onto the fact that she was Timothy Leary's goddaughter and that her parents had been hippies. At the beginning I think it made her a little uneasy, because she was always going to be asked questions about, you know, Leary, LSD, whether she took drugs and how her parents treated that.... So she had this burden. But she figured out how the press was looking to denigrate it. She resisted – and instead, without giving them any private information, she spoke proudly about her colorful childhood and colorful friends and godfather.

Tim's the kind of person where, if you didn't know him and read about him, you probably formed a negative opinion either that he'd done damage or that he was too full of himself – too much of a celebrity. But if you met the guy, he was one of the most generous, loving people in the world. Once Winona got to know him after this period of discomfort, she became comfortable and was proud of it.

Cindy and I did go through a phase where we wondered whether we hadn't saddled her with this difficult problem – our past as hippies who lived in communes and hung out with people like Leary and Ginsberg. We were proud, but we were concerned it wasn't the best thing for Winona.

Again, the '80s and into the early '90s, America was a much more conservative place than it had been in the '60s and '70s. And more conservative than it is now. So in a way the times have caught up with her. Just like the '90s generation of youth honors, for the most part, the '60s generation. Yours is the first generation to honor us, and we are profoundly grateful for that. And Winona's one of those.

Though we don't want you to think that we accept everything that happened there either. There were a lot of different countercultures, just as today. But the ideas were often valid – and although they're not exactly coming back, they're being respected. A generation is growing up now that is looking at it again...carefully. And seeing the excesses, which certainly happened, and the mistakes. And the fact that the '60s didn't have an immediate impact of success...in fact, it's been pushed underground for 30 years. Many people are *still* afraid of the '60s counterculture – as if *we* caused the Vietnam War or something.

How about the rest of your kids?

They're more or less like her. They all have a certain sense that they could've had a better childhood. Who doesn't? I guess it wasn't an idyllic childhood, it was like – OK, we didn't have any money. We were poor. And there was a certain amount of weirdness where we lived. I mean, a commune of 30 people? It's gonna get a little wild.

Was that an experiment of yours, or someone else's that you joined?

We joined. We actually lived communally before that but it was in the city. The country commune is much more...nitty-gritty, because you're really isolated from the rest of the world. And it was probably a lot to subject our kids to. I don't think we gave them the best possible childhood, because our needs, as parents, were different from theirs at the time. But we gave them an interesting childhood. I think they benefited from it. But they haven't always seen it that way – and I have no problem with that.

When Winona became an actress, Tim gave her lots of encouragement. When she went out on auditions, we'd sometimes visit him afterwards. He came to all the premieres and screenings...and as she became famous...he loved it – the fact that...the Children of the Flower Children were going places! That we were producing children who were pretty amazing. There are many others besides Winona, needless to say, but...she was the one whose career was unfolding before our eyes and his.

Leonardo DiCaprio.

Leonardo's father, George DiCaprio, was a brilliant underground comic artist who illustrated a book of Tim's...a comic book. Leonardo hung out at Tim's when he was a kid. Uma Thurman's father was a great friend of Tim's and Tim was married to Uma's mother.

So did all these kids know each other?

Some of them knew each other, but they're not close friends like some of their parents are. Let's not forget that a great *many* of cool and successful youth today had hippie parents.

Wonder what the connection is between having counterculture parents...

I wonder if there is one?

...and becoming Hollywood icons.

My father wrote hippie music and my sister wrote cheesy '80s music. I'm writing about what's real. I'm writing about giving crack to the inner cities. –Bijou Phillips

Well, there's a couple of 'em, sure.

There's at least *three*.

You know what it is? Here's the connection. We were great parents. Hippies were great parents. <pause> I'm generalizing. *Most* of us were. Those who got too strung out, obviously, weren't good parents. But we were…*kind* of permissive, but we *encouraged* our kids. We wanted to undo our own '50s, repressive childhoods. Our motto was, Do your own thing. Be self-actualized. Don't follow society's dictates in terms of being pressured to be a "professional" person and find material success. The emphasis was on creativity. So that's why I think a lot of the children of so-called hippie parents have become the kind of people who are doing what they want to do on their own terms, and value creativity enormously.

Don't you think it's sort of ironic that you told your kids to do their own thing and they wound up becoming Hollywood movie stars – in the eye of the mainstream? And they're accepted by the mainstream in a way that *your* generation was not.

True, it *is* an irony. I mean, none of us can say we expected this to happen. And the *material* success…that was something we never looked for. That's something we've had to come to terms with, that our kids are – some of our kids – are materially, financially, very successful. And we…put that down. But at least they're doing it on their own terms.

You put it down when they were growing up?

Probably. OK, that's a *big* irony. <laughs> Another irony is, I put down Hollywood. I disliked, for the most part, Hollywood movies. Cindy and I loved foreign movies, and the occasional offbeat Hollywood film.

I hardly ever watch Hollywood movies. I haven't seen most of Winona's films.

Uh huh. Well, I *have* to watch her movies. <laughter> I had to get "in step" with Hollywood. But she's been in a few masterpieces – *Heathers*, *Age of Innocence*, *The Crucible*, *Night on Earth*. But I also had to watch the movies of every actor, director, cinematographer she might be working with someday, because as her guardians we were reading scripts and advising her for many years.

So you did have input that way.

I guess. And it was a very tricky thing, because a child doesn't want interference from the parents. So we had to, you know, be *subtle*. But I wanna dispel a rumor that's been in print many times, that Cindy and I didn't want her to do the movie *Heathers*, which really was her breakthrough film – and one of the best movies about teenagers ever. We *wanted* her to do it. It was her *agency* who didn't – they were afraid it was the kind of movie that would sully her reputation.

So how did you deal with it, the irony of the material success? You raised them on a commune, and *now* look.

<laughs> Well, we had to adjust. I mean she was successful on her own terms. And the thrill of seeing your kid succeed overwhelms any feelings of "Material success isn't what this family is after." It just comes with the territory. Anyway, it's her life and not ours. <pause> It's not the *hardest* adjustment in the world to make, to suddenly have a credit card. <laughs> She was doing it with her talent; she was enjoying it immensely. It just happened to bring material rewards with it. So, you know, the whole family's standard of living was raised. It took a little getting used to.

What were some of the things you were worried about when you saw your daughter making the transition from actress to icon?

It's measure of success that she became kind of an icon. It brought the problems of too much fame, obsessive fans, media backlash. And of not being able to go out in public without some inherent danger, of not being able to have a normal life. And then there were occasional times when there were serious threats and security problems.

Have you been able to come to terms with that?

It still comes up from time to time. And it's the biggest worry we have. But it's not there most of the time. It's interesting: she's passing into a more mature phase of her life and career now where there are younger actors than her… I think some of the obsession hopefully isn't as apparent as it was five or ten years ago, where people, especially young men, would be so obsessed that they'd crash the set of her movies, follow her car, send her 10 letters a day... But it's easing off lately, and happily…

She didn't go to college.

Wasn't she planning to, at some point?

She kept planning to go. She *wanted* to go – she misses having not gone.

She could, still.

Not really. I don't think she can. I mean, she'd cause too much of a stir, on campus. In fact we looked into that and it just didn't seem like a good idea.

What do you think she would've chosen to study?

Probably English literature. She loves to read. She always goes for the literary type of script. And the script based on a famous novel, or just something really well written. In a way, Hollywood *was* her college. Each movie a new semester.

You said you'd go along with Winona to auditions and read scripts to help her make decisions. But at some point she grew up and must have started making her own….

Well, like any teenager she wanted her independence from us. But it's good to have a guardian when you're a teen working in a world with adults. It was a very tricky situation, because you don't want your parents hanging around when you're growing up – and in public. So we learned how to stay in the background, just keep our eyes open so we could be protective as parents and help…but also not interfere. In a way, being around a celebrity, you're kind of a shadow person.

Celebrities almost *glow* radioactively. I've seen this in Tim and Winona and a few others. As they walk through the street, there's energy waves coming off them. And it's going *on* to them from passers by. As parents we're kind of a safety net. Winona always knows she could come and stay with us and her sister and brothers and be completely protected and comfortable. And she does. She loves to come visit, drop out of her role of a celebrity to hang out with us and her old friends. She can't go somewhere in LA without being spotted and surrounded. We've been chased in cars many times…by paparazzi.

So how do you live?

Well, you be as private as you can be. Winona's good with privacy. She needs it, and she knows how to get it and where… Tim, being older, definitely loved to hang out with people at his house, have tons of people around. Two different celebrity styles. And of course Tim faced

I don't have to be there when the diapers are changed or anything really awful happens. –Woody Allen on raising Mia Farrow's children danger often in his life – but mainly from the government.

He knew a lot of intellectual luminaries, so was it night after night of sitting around the kitchen table talking?

A *lot* of intellectual talk, one-upmanship, philosophical game-playing with one-liners. Tim was the master of that. He had the fastest mind of anyone. Tim was an authentic genius. He was also a social genius. He could have 50, 75 strangers in his house…and it wouldn't phase him. He makes a game out of it. But he really enjoyed life. You know, having a meal at home w/ friends, sitting around afterwards having a smoke and chatting. All celebrities love to be able to drop out of that role. That's one of the things we're there for. As parents even more so, to provide that space of comfort for our child…who can have a hard time finding that.

Do you think she ever regrets not being able to just walk down the street and go get a bagel?

Mmm, no no. I think it's just an irritation at times. She's gotten used to it. She's also good at disguises. Also, every restaurant and shop in LA *delivers*. <laughter> You wondered how we coped with her fame as parents. It happened gradually. In a way it looks like it happened fast, but…she wasn't an overnight sensation. She was somebody who did good work – each movie was a stepping stone toward the next until it was suddenly apparent that she was the finest actress of her generation. …This is the first interview I've ever given, where I've talked about her.

Really?

The mainstream press: they tried to destroy Tim and occasionally give Winona hard time. But celebrities like them learn to be smart in handling the media. They have to be! We decided early on in her career that we weren't going to give interviews. We didn't want to…we're cynical about the way reporters conduct interviews. We got a taste of it, the pushiness and digging for dirt…but I've always supported counterculture publications and yours is obviously the only place…I wouldn't be doing this if it were *People* magazine.

Neither would I… What about privacy between parents and children? I don't always want my parents to know what I'm doing – I can't imagine them being able to pick up a magazine or turn on the TV…

Are your parents kind of straight and conservative?

Yeah. That might be the difference.

Yeah, we're not.

You said that when you have celebrities in the family your entire life gets overshadowed. You've said you've done so much Tim work, you're ready to move on…

It's true they overshadow you. On the other hand, not everybody is cut out to be a celebrity. In a way you're glad… They're out there on the front lines being famous. Like when I'd go to a premiere with Winona. She walks on, like, a red carpet – it's a gauntlet. There are two hundred photographers. They're all screaming. There are TV cameras. And Cindy and I are behind her, we get out of the limo, and we're invisible. And we wanna be invisible. And we walk right through. In fact there was a picture in *People* magazine of Winona – and *half* of me. I was next to her, but they only showed half of me. I wasn't identified, and I thought this is *exactly* right…I loved it. I loved seeing *half* of me in *People* magazine, 'cause in a way, we are like half people, we non-celebrities. Celebrities are like 20 people at once.

Don't people around them resent that, though?

Only people who might be jealous of that. Most people aren't… Most people are content to be the friend, or the parent, and just help them with this incredible responsibility of keeping it together – in fact, looking good for the camera that's on you at all times. Tim liked to tell how Marshall McLuhan coached him to always smile in public. The medium is the message. If Tim was in handcuffs surrounded by 20 cops, he would still be the one smiling.

How do you deal with criticism and cruelty?

It's one of the hardest things to deal with. I just get angry at critics when they fail to note her fine performance… <laughter> You know? It's just my chauvinism. My child…I stand up for my kids. Of course, obviously. Any parent does. I get worried when she gets unwanted attention. Sometimes that comes from a Hollywood insider; it's not necessarily an obsessive fan. There are a lot of people in the industry who are not very cool. But she's really learned. She's a veteran. Twenty movies in 13 years – she can take care of herself.

I'm sure people took many potshots at Tim in the press, made fun of Winona. How do you respond?

Sometimes I get a little upset but I'm used to it. First of all, I hooked up with one of the most notorious people on the face of the earth. I mean, Richard Nixon called him the most dangerous men in America in 1970.

I'm so cynical about the press… I get a little annoyed but I expect criticism. I expect backlash. Winona's career's gonna have ups and downs in terms of the critics. They're gonna say, *Oh, she's finished. She's a has-been.* Then she'll have to make a comeback. *Oh, she made a comeback!* Then they'll love her again. <laughter> So…predictable.

She'll inevitably have detractors and critics, and she'll be unfairly criticized. There'll be people who want to see her fail, and then will build her up and then pull her down… You gotta ride it out. I do. I might be briefly upset, but it doesn't really phase me. She'll occasionally call me up because she's upset over something in the paper that was said about her… We just take it in stride. I feel that way myself, about actors I don't like, *I* like to see their movies fail, you know? <laughs> If I weren't Winona's father, I think I would really still enjoy her work a lot. But I might reach a point where…enough about her already! But I can't; I'm her parent. I can't get enough. On the other hand, I'm not craving it. It's my karmic duty to be her father and perform this role as well as I can.

It's just more mainstream Hollywood movies.

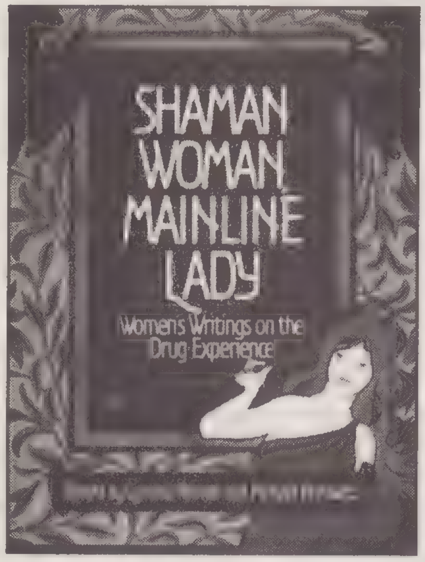
Yeah. <laughs> I'll probably be remembered as Timothy Leary's archivist and bibliographer, and Winona Ryder's father. I've done that for the last 25 years.

So how does it feel?

It's OK. It's fine with me. My own accomplishments will be discovered by people. I couldn't be Winona or Timothy. I couldn't stand the attention. I couldn't handle the pressure of having to always look good and talk smart. <laughs>

Oh by the way…it isn't like… <pause> I think I'm going to be famous…as an archivist, as a writer, as a bookseller who sells books on the literature of drugs… If eventually when the drug-war madness is over, there's gonna be more respect for my work, and someone like Tim will have enormous respect. So I might even have posthumous fame. Who knows? Maybe even for things I don't even realize. But <laughs> I'm not holding my breath for this. Maybe it'll come full circle and Winona will play a character based on Laura Huxley or Rosemary Leary in a major motion picture, help educate people about the '60s counterculture and what it was really about….

But it's been a great ride. Tim and Winona have been magic carpet rides. But I know them as people. And therefore I can view them objectively as celebrities, I think, and enjoy that part of them and not get too carried away with it.


SHAMAN WOMAN MAINLINE LADY
Womens Writings on the Drug Experience

Copies of the first edition of *Shaman Woman, Mainline Lady: Women's Writings on the Drug Experience* are available for $10 postpaid from Flashback Books, 20 Sunnydale Ave. Ste. A195, Mill Valley, CA 94941. A new edition will be published early 2000 retitled *Sisters of the Extreme* (a quote from Grace Slick about the book when it first came out). You can order it now at Amazon.com.

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I used to wonder how Winona survived through her career so far a media darling. Nary a scandal, it's like she has an invisible force field protecting her from bad press. And really, besides this I don't think I've heard an unkind word, unless being considered "perfect" is offensive (and I'm not quite sure what the referencing of Winona in South Park was about but maybe they were also just razzing on her never getting razzed.) This is hardly "bad press" and perhaps gives more insight into the writer than into Winona, for as much as we all do it – especially to people of renown – how valid is defining a person's character after one small brush? But it's a perspective that is genuine for what it is. And while it's admittedly awkward printing this beside an interview of Winona's father, then again, the least Ben Is Dead has been is awkward. – ed.

Celebrity for Dinner

by Denise Sullivan

[collage by darby]

Oh, I've met them all, is what I like to say. One way or another, I've often found myself in the company of celebrities. The backstage, the press conference, the soundcheck and the occasional party is where you'll find me because it's my beat as a journalist – sometimes it's fun, sometimes it's work. Sometimes, and it's always beyond my control, acquaintanceships and actual friendships are formed because hey, celebrities are people too: people you might know and like and have things in common with if they lived in your town or on your street. But nothing would prepare me for the night two entertainment giants (although they *are* actually quite small in person), Winona Ryder and Bruce Springsteen, with their respective dates, Dave Pirner of Soul Asylum and Bruce's mom, came over to my apartment for dinner.

The set-up is complicated but I'll try to make it simple: My now ex-husband was an opening act for Bruce Springsteen in 1995, and before and after the dates the pair were forging what looked like a friendship. In the spirit of getting to know each other, a tentative arrangement was made backstage in Berkeley to see Bruce's buddy, Joe Ely, the following night. Dave, "an old friend of Bruce's," overhearing this, expressed interest. He and Winona were living in San Francisco at the time, and in some alternate universe, a plan was hatched, but how it turned into dinner at our small struggling musician and writer's apartment (you know the place), I'm unclear.

Between 2-3:00 the next afternoon, my husband made the nerve-wracking confirmation call and Adele, Mrs. Springsteen senior, answered. "Are we still on for dinner?" he asked.

"Let me ask Bruce," she said. "Who else will be there?"

"Just us," he replied.

"Ah, an intimate gathering." Judging that this was not what the Springsteen's had in mind, my husband proffered, "Well, we could invite Dave and Winona...."

"We'll call you right back," she said, and hung up.

About a half hour later, Bruce called for directions. I gave them to him and we skipped into action. I cleaned the house like a madwoman. My husband checked on everyone's meat-eating status, called Dave and we started to prepare the meal: chicken curry – a detailed Indian recipe, fried Indian-spiced potatoes, a big green salad with lots of un-Indian arugula, raita (the yogurt stuff), rice and naan bread. Dave called back. Winona wasn't coming. I set five places.

At 7:30, the doorbell rang: Dave *and* Winona. She decided at the last minute to come. Osmotically, I wanted Dave to know that I was on his side: I went to every show the Replacements and Hüsker Dü ever gave here, though I didn't like his band from Minneapolis quite as much but I knew his records "Made to be Broken" and "Hangtime" well and had interviewed his bandmate.

"I had dinner with you once in New Orleans," (you know, with an R.E.M. and a Mekon and your ex-girlfriend, the one you broke up with after 12 years so you could be with Winona).

Blank stare.

"Uh, don't remember."

The mind-meld was not working – but an alliance had been formed in my head. All I knew was that Dave was the same age as

Fame is a fickle food, Upon a shifting plate. –Emily Dickinson me, we had a lot of the same friends and I just knew I knew where he was coming from. Strangely, my heart went out to him. He seemed like he needed help.

As far as where I was coming from was that I was a 34-year-old housewife – but no one ever asked about me and I never offered. I'm a fucking rock music writer is what I am, but when your husband invites Bruce Springsteen and Dave Pirner for dinner I guess it's best left unsaid. Still, who I am, what do I do, where I'm from – it never came up – which I find is usually the case when one is surrounded by public figures who know full well what the other does and are duly impressed with one another.

Winona, well she's wearing Levi's cords (and mind you this is three years ago when everyone wanted them but she *had* them, so to her credit, she was all over that trend) and what appeared to be a kind of crappy t-shirt but it was probably Agnes B. Anyway, if I were going to someone's house for dinner I wouldn't dress like a schlub, but when you're a celebrity, your presence, I suppose, is enough. She came bearing the requisite hostess gift that she presented to my husband: a vintage paperback copy of Jim Thompson's *Nothing More Than Murder* which I am proud to say, even though I am divorced, is still in my possession and will promptly be sold at a future flea market.

"Wow, your place is sooooooo great," directed to me, of course. "I wish mine looked like this. I just have boxes everywhere...."

Funny, I had recently seen her in a spread in *Architectural Digest* in her New York apartment – no lie. But I'm thinking, "Hey, you too can have this look; simply buy all of your furniture at garage sales and thrift stores, find stuff on the street and haul it inside, ask your mom if you can have the stuff in her basement. It's that easy!" But I decided to withhold my decorating secrets out of spite, I think.

Shortly after, Bruce and mom arrived. They'd gotten lost, which meant that my directions were for shit, or he was really dumb, but one way or the other, they were driving down Mission Street in a big ol' Cadillac and that's not where he wanted to be without his bodyguard (who by the way was posted at the Joe Ely gig at the nearby club 'til night's end, but we never showed). He parked in front of our house, which was likely to result in smashed windows – but I didn't tell him that. Everyone doffed the coats and settled in, and I'm thinking, "I am now going to rest Winona Ryder's and Bruce Springsteen's coats on MY bed," and I think she picked up on that because she asked a number of times during the evening where her coat was.

During the meal, and I don't know how we got started, but Winona decided to give me the history of film – hers and in general. I think I made the mistake of asking a question about my favorite director, Martin Scorsese, with whom she'd worked in *The Age of Innocence.* I would soon be sorry.

"Boy I'm trying to decide whether to do *Alien 4*. I've never really done an action picture, but I think *Alien* is good and Ripley is a strong female, so I think that would be good. I just finished this very intense project (*The Crucible*) and the actor I was working with whom I'd worked with before (Daniel Day Lewis) was really sensitive so even though I was being beaten up and stuff he would just hold me and I felt so safe. I had a hard time making the decision to do that film too...."

And so it went in an endless stream for, oh, I'd say about 45 minutes. To my left, Bruce was telling a story that took place around the time of his album "The River", and what it was like pre- and post-bigtime fame. And what all the therapists said about him looking to place roots and so he bought a big house, but he had no furniture. And then he got some furniture, but he had no wife. And then he got a wife, but she was the wrong wife. And then he got the right wife. Dave was grappling with some of the same issues which is why I suspect the two had bonded over the last couple of years. But Winona grabbed me again.

"So what do you think about the *Alien* movies because I think...." I didn't really give a shit what she thought and I don't think of the *Alien* movies ever. But there was another lull after a long stretch and Bruce said something like, "And that brings us to today." And his mom said something like, "That's right. You never would've let your hair go like that back then. He was always trying to cover up the part he'd lost but now he just lets it go...."

"Aw, mom," etc.

Dave went to the bathroom and when he returned to the table Winona said, "I hope you put the toilet seat down."

It wasn't even a joke. He kind of sheepishly said, "Yup," and conversation resumed. I started to think about what life at home must be like for them. My marriage, which unbeknownst to me was about to unfurl in a few months, seemed like sheer bliss, all tranquility and nirvana compared to that shit. I looked around at the plates on the table.

I was so glad Dave was eating; there was plenty of food but "real" celebrities apparently do not eat. Both Bruce and Winona pushed their small portions around the plate without ever really taking bites and I know because Winona sat to my right and Bruce to my left and I was observing. Small bites. Trace bites – like a baby takes or the kind you take when you are extremely infirm. I think major stars must be worried about weight gain, or perhaps being poisoned or choking. Although Winona did take a rather unfairly large portion of crispy potatoes leaving few for the rest of us. It occurred to me that they probably have live-in chefs who prepare their meals to order according to whatever diet they're following that week: The Zone or maybe something suggested by Deepak Chopra.

I bought a fruit tart from a bakery for dessert. One of those multi-colored, exotic $24 fruit tarts. This is a big deal when you have no money like we didn't. But no one ate it. Except Dave. They were more interested in placing their aprés dinner beverage orders: herbal tea with honey (guess who?), tea with milk and sugar, coffee, decaf. At this point the hostess/I have no mind charade was starting to wear thin on me – what in the hell do they think I'm running?

"Uh, we've got peppermint, chamomile and raspberry..."

"Um! Raspberry sounds good," chirped W. Bruce seconded it. "Do you have any honey?" Very un-Brucelike!

Uh, yeah, about one teaspoonful left that appears to have gone hard in the jar. I microwave it and put it in a pretty bowl with a spoon and no one's the wiser. We started to clear things away and I insisted no one help, but Bruce's mom couldn't help herself. At which point I decided to confide in her that I was terribly nervous about this whole having Bruce over thing because of course I'd *seen* Bruce's house and surely, our apartment was more like one of his attached guest houses than anywhere he's used to being entertained.

"Don't worry honey, when he comes to my house, all he wants to eat is spaghetti."

And by the way, she is very happy that Bruce dumped the other one and that Patti was able to give him three children in such quick succession and believe me, I did nothing to encourage this line of conversation over dishes.

When we repaired to the sitting room to find the rest of the group listening to records, Bruce called for a Coke. Thank God there was one can buried at the back of the fridge. Winona had tucked into the

Glory is a heavy burden, a murdering poison, and to bear it is an art. –Oriana Fallaci bowl of Japanese rice crackers from Trader Joe's that had been on the table since before dinner and didn't stop picking till they were gone.

We mostly listened to Bob Dylan while Bruce told stories about the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame concert, his earliest musical memories and of course, Dylan.

"Play 'Lenny Bruce!' Play 'Blind Willie McTell!'" he'd shout. Winona said, "My parents were really into Bob Dylan, but I didn't know all this stuff about him. These songs are really good."

Bruce wanted to know all about Winona's celebrated ex-hippy parents but basically, I didn't. I wanted Bruce to ask me about my parents. Or anything. My husband, sensing I felt out of it, offered up the tidbit that I was the local rock *Jeopardy!* champ. This perked Bruce up momentarily and naturally, I demurred, but things were winding down and as Winona started frantically looking for her jacket, a kind of J Crew-ish corduroy pea coat, and checking the pockets to see if I'd stolen anything, she said, "Well, I sure learned a lot about Bob Dylan tonight. That was really interesting." Dave kind of half-whispered, "Well honey, if you want to know more, we've got all these same records at home."

As they departed, Dave, Winona, my husband and I agreed that we would see more of each other – go to a show or something – since we appeared to like the same music, live in the same city and had Bruce's seal of approval.

"But you'll have to let us know when it is and how to get the tickets," said Winona. "We never know what's going on." I guessed celebrities don't read the paper.

The next day I was on the exercise bike telling my Bruce-fan girlfriend about the night when call-waiting rang and it was Bruce. He called to say thank you and man, he sure liked our apartment and by the way, would we come with him to look for vintage clothing today? I replied uh, yes, breathlessly, partly because I was winded from the bike, and partly because Bruce rang my phone, I answered, and he was talking to me. He must've told me five times that day how much he liked what I'd done with our place and what a nice night he'd had. "It's real homey." Homey if you like books and CDs and records and pictures of Jesus everywhere – I guess he does and that will forever endear him to me. He doesn't have the nickname the Boss for nothin'.

One day more than a year later, I saw Dave at the movies. As we both waited in line for popcorn I said to him, "Hey, how are you?"

Blank stare.

"Remember me?"

Blank stare.

"Uh, you had dinner at my house, with Bruce?"

"Oh yeah, right."

"What movie are you seeing?"

"*Austin Powers.*"

I didn't tell him that I was attending the in-person tribute to Harvey Keitel, and sitting about 10 feet away from Harv in the theater. It seemed, well, not right. And it never bothered me that he never remembered me because, hey everybody must get stoned. I never saw him again after that. Shortly after, the rumor mill had Winona seeing Tré Cool of Green Day or Steven Jenkins of Third Eye Blind or some other rock star. I think Dave had been retired. I heard they gave up the place in San Francisco. I never saw Winona again either. And I didn't feel the need to see *Alien 4* or *The Crucible.* I'd already lived them.

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Illustrations by Sarita Vendetta,
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TO WALK AMONG THE STARS: MY CELEBRITY ENCOUNTERS

BY HOWARD "STARFUCKER" HALLIS

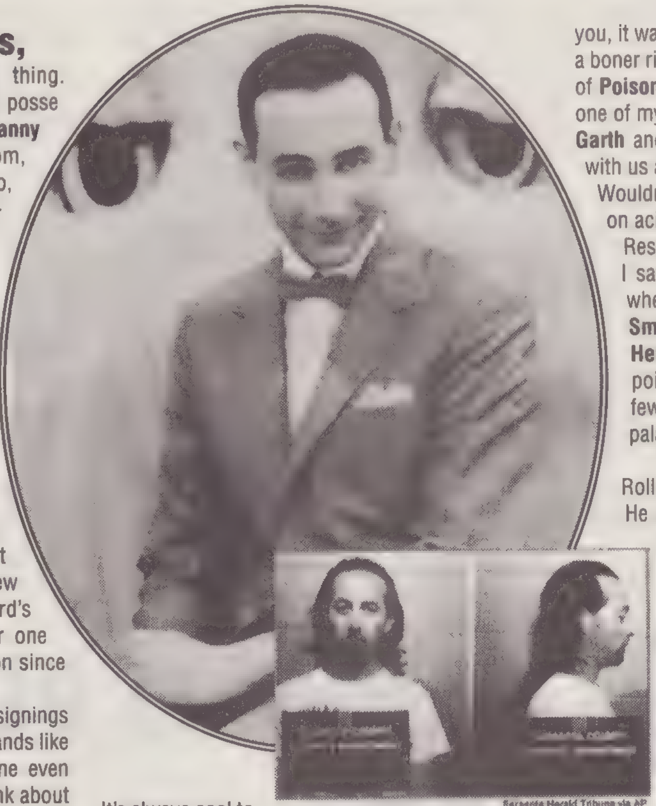
Since I live in Los Angeles, celebrity sightings are almost a daily thing. Whether it's seeing **Bobby Brown** and his posse getting a snack over at Jerry's Deli or **Danny DeVito** hanging out at The Viper Room, chances are that no matter where you go, eventually you'll run into some sort of public figure.

Of course, luck has a little bit to do with it.

Back when I was in tenth grade, *Moonlighting* was my favorite show (Don't ask.) So when I saw that they were filming an episode across the street from my high school, it didn't take much to persuade me to ditch and meet the stars. **Bruce Willis** and **Cybil Shepherd** were there in all their glory, and Bruce even told us a dirty joke! (Q: Why do you duct-tape a gerbil? A: So it won't explode when you fuck it!) The crew went on to complain about Ms. Shepherd's being difficult to work with. I remember one crew guy saying "Biggest bitch in television since **Joan Collins**!"

Then there was the Tower Records signings where my friends would drag me to meet bands like **XTC** and **the Blow Monkeys.** Does anyone even remember the Blow Monkeys? All I can think about when they come to mind is this 16-year-old girl who we took with us to the signing. She was soooo obsessed with singer **Dr. Robert** that she started crying and convulsing when he signed her record. His manager gave her the info on what hotel they were staying at (since she was an "attractive" 16-year-old) so she could fulfill her groupie fantasies. She cried with joy all the way back to her house and swore to us all she would bear his children (or at least give him a rim job better than the other guys he was probably porking). After that experience, I knew I wanted to be a rock star.

Getting groupies would certainly be cool, but BEING a groupie wasn't really my thing, much to the dismay of **Pet Shop Boy Neil Tennant,** who I met outside of the **1985 MTV Music Awards** (along with a Harley-riding **Jay Leno** and **Whitney Houston**, who is actually really hot in person – at least she was in the mid-'80s). I was a big Pet Shop Boys fan and it was really great to meet them. This was before they admitted to *The Advocate* that they were gay, so I was really oblivious to the true nature of their intentions when Mr. Tennant invited me and my friend up to their hotel room after they commented on how much they liked my black trenchcoat. Luckily, my mom was on her way to pick up my 14-year-old-ass before the Pet Shop Boys got their hands on it. Thanks mom!



Sarasota Herald Tribune via AP

It's always cool to tell people you went to school with famous people. ***Beverly Hills 90210*** star **Brian Austin Green** went to Hamilton High while I was there. Even though I probably never talked to the guy, one finds that one tends to stretch the truth when trying to impress people with vast celeb encounters. So a vague acquaintance becomes a good friend. If you happen to be standing in line at Alpha Beta with **John Travolta** and don't say diddly shit to him, you'll probably tell all your friends you "met" him since you were in such close proximity. What does that say about the pathetic nature of our existence?

It's amazing how lame we can get. For example, **Fiona Apple** went to Hamilton as well, but years after I had graduated. Some of my brother's friends knew her though. They told me her nickname was "Jugs." Since I now have this "inside information" only those close to her know, I can get away with bullshitting to people that I met her there.

It's great to have friends in close personal relationships with the rich and famous. One of my pals dated **Alyssa Milano** for a while and brought her to my art opening. How cool is that? Now everyone there looked at ME like I was the shit, even though I had never met her before. Why? Because SHE WAS THERE! I was also lucky enough to get invited to a pool party with her, and let me tell you, it was a real effort to stop myself from busting a boner right out of my JC Penney trunks as images of **Poison Ivy II** flashed through my head. Another one of my friends was very close to ***90210's* Jenny Garth** and we almost persuaded her to drop acid with us at a coffeehouse after hours back in 1991. Wouldn't that be crazy? Can you imagine Kelley on acid? What would Brandon think?

Restaurants are good places to see the stars. I saw **Gene Hackman** at Hamburger Hamlet when I was 11 years old. **Courtney Thorne Smith** at International House of Pancakes and **Henry Rollins** at Denny's. When my friend pointed out the **Black Flag** singer sitting a few booths down at my favorite 24-hour shit palace, I had to say something. So I said:

"Wow. I think it's really cool to see Henry Rollins eating at Denny's!"

He looked at me and said (in a husky, punk-rock voice): "GOTTA EAT."

Ah yes, the early '90s... before and just as alternative music was going over to the mainstream, you could pretty much guarantee you would meet a rock star by going over to **Jabberjaw**. **Courtney Love** was a regular there, and seeing a band play that stage was like seeing them in your bathroom, the place was so small. **Nirvana** played there with **Hole** and **L7**, and **Iggy Pop** showed up to see them. This was right after ***Nevermind*** came out, and there were more people packed into that place than I had ever seen. It must have been about 120° in there. In the middle of the show I went up to Iggy Pop and asked him if he wanted to come to my art class with me for show and tell. He said no. Jerk. **Beck** used to play Jabberjaw as well, and used to play an open mike night I hosted every week at another coffee house called **The Mad Hatter's Espresso Bar.** He used to have people call him Farm Boy and I thought he was cool because he was in a **King Missile** song. This was right before he became one of the biggest rock stars in the world and stopped doing coffeehouse gigs. Oh well.

Genesis P-Orridge from **Psychic TV** and I have been friends for years. I was with him and **Timothy Leary** during the LA riots back in 1992 and smoked lots of hash as we watched the city burn below us. It was as if the world was coming to an end, but it was all right because I was hanging out with one each of my favorite authors and musicians as the apocalypse was raging. Genesis later introduced me to **Love and Rockets** when he was staying with them in Los Angeles. These people to me are big deals. I'll hang with Genesis, **David J**, or Tim Leary any day over **Tom Cruise** or **Brad Pitt.**

Timothy Leary and I began working together

It is a mark of many famous people that they cannot part with their brightest hour. –Lillian Hellman back in the early '90s and celebs would come to his house all the time for lavish parties and drug fests. A partial list (off the top of my head) of people who were there: **Johnny Depp, Winona Ryder, Perry Farrell, Eldridge Cleaver, Robert Anton Wilson, Ram Dass, John Lilly, Anthony Keidis, Tony Curtis, Dennis Hopper, Garey Busey, Michelle Phillips, Dan Ackroyd, Tool, Dave Pirner, Laura Huxley, Babes In Toyland, Robert Williams, Robert Crumb, Al Jourgenson, Ozric Tentacles, Lily Tomlin, John Perry Barlow, Bill Mahr, Tony Scott, Robin Tunney, Parker Posey, Adam Sandler** and **Doug Rushkoff.** It was the salon to end all salons, and there will never be anything else like it. Why? Because not only was it celebrity central, but you had respect for these people. They were the rebels. Just to show up there was a statement.

Let's see...other stuff I did with the stars...I watched 3D porno movies over at **Pee-Wee Herman's** house! I met **Paul Reubens** at a party thrown at **Mark Mothersbaugh**'s house atop the Hollywood Hills. Timothy Leary invited me there and I started talking with Paul and the next thing you know he invites me to his place and pops in a video of some 3D smut. One of them had these two girls going at it as these computer-generated fruits started flying out at you. All I kept thinking to myself as we watched this was: "No one is ever gonna believe this."

So why is this shit important? Why do we remember our encounters with public figures better than most that we have with much closer acquaintances? Why do we try to impress people with our superficial run-ins with the rich and famous? Maybe because they are the modern-day pantheon of deities in our material-driven capitalist society. A society where **Leonardo DiCaprio** (who I actually talked to at my neighborhood Taco Bell around the time ***Titanic*** finished shooting) is our **Zeus** and **Cameron Diaz** (who I saw eating lunch at **Fred 62** in Silverlake) is our **Demeter.** Isn't this pathetic? Is this progress? Is the species evolving toward the **Andy Warhol** utopia? A few minutes of godliness is better than nothing I guess...

One day I hope the tabloids write about me...that **Oprah** has me on to plug my new movie and I get to do a walk-on on **Letterman**. Guest host ***Talk Soup.*** Go to cheesy awards shows and have enough money after paying for my new house in Palm Springs to blow on some worthy charity so they can honor me at a banquet. I want **Liz Smith** to be calling me about my venereal diseases and **The Viper Room** to let my shitty-ass band play there only because they know my name can draw a crowd. It probably won't happen, but maybe it will. It's the ultimate LA wet dream. I grew up here, for chrissakes!! They OWE me!!! I'm not some backwoods barley-chewing yokel who sees ***Earnest Goes to Hell*** and decides: "Yeah! I can be a star!" I've paid my dues! It's time for my spotlight! WHERE'S MY AGENT?!? CALL MY LAWYER!!! Give me a line of that crappy biker speed and let me close my eyes and pretend I'm doing high grade Colombian coke with **Robert DeNiro** and **Quentin Tarantino** at some trendy dimly lit bar on the strip as we all get blow jobs from expensive hookers while discussing our next "high concept" piece of cinema we'll be screening at Cannes. Let them do that **E! True Hollywood Story** on me and let that bully who used to kick my ass back in 9th grade see me on the TV in his welfare rat-infested one-bedroom shithole while his fat fuck wife yells at him to try and get a raise down at the supermarket where he works! That's why the struggle is worth it! To show them all! To have the last laugh! To go out in a blaze of glory! To do it My Way!

That is why I sit at my cubicle and grow bitter. Damn you all! You HATE ME! You REALLY HATE ME!! Every gray hair on my head is one less part I'm gonna be offered. One less opportunity to become the teen heartthrob I always wanted to be. Every year it looks a lot more likely that I'll be doing web-site design rather than filling concert halls or going to fancy premieres.

Oh well. At least I got a taste of the spotlight by proxy…by being in the PRESENCE of those who made it...the ones who fulfilled all my dreams while I try to pay my bills. Maybe that's why people remember this shit and try to act like it's no big deal even though it is. Maybe the celebrity represents the culmination of what we all hope to achieve but very few of us actually do. They are the lottery winners of life. The lucky bastards, the ones fate shines on. That is, until their wife shoots them in the head while they sleep or they OD after a gig...

Fuck it. That's showbiz.

* * * * *

Howard Hallis runs a celebrity look-alike escort service that caters to elderly women. If you're looking for Frank Sinatra, Dom DeLuise or Regis Philburn to attend your next church luncheon, contact the offices of* Ben Is Dead *for more info. *Editor's note: And when you see Howard on the street, ask him for more details about what really happened between him and PeeWee….*

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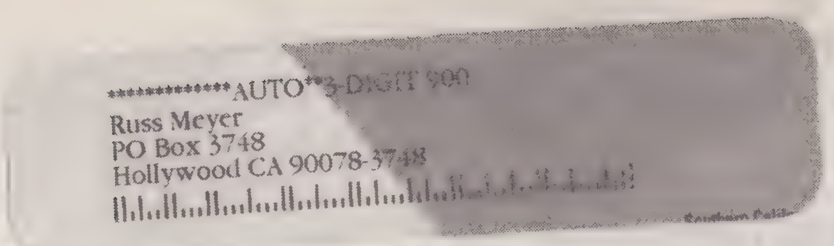
I read biographies of the greats, and they were so messed up that I thought I'd better mess myself up too. But I couldn't. I'm too small. –Winona Ryder



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WHAT DO YOU WANT?

Reverend Randall Tin-Ear

What do you want? WHAT DO YOU WANT?! The Rolling Stones? *Rolling Stone*? Something squared? I can give you all of that and nothing - just like all of your favourite rock stars. This is the Celebrity issue, and what makes a celebrity but the desire of dirt by those fans who comprise the very platform that supports the gravy train that propels a person to fame.

My questionably illustrious (illustriously questionable) career as a not-at-all-well-paid writer has brought me across the occasional paths of people whose talents are widely renown. One of my recent writers, Nelson, happens to be the happy husband of the Entourage Coordinator (i.e., personal manager) for *the* Rolling Stones. (And do not ask me for "merchandise" that is unavailable to the public yet to which I am privy - ha! - as I refuse to even exploit my connection by compelling Nelson to give to Lil to give to Mick my ex-girlfriend's CD or cassette.) I know where the band stays, the room in which they sleep, the telephone numbers with which they may be directly reached, the dates and times during which I may bother them, etc. And if you ever ask me about which song is on which album, I can only claim my sincere enjoyment of the band's music.

Murder and magazines are mutated together to colour this next account, a brief bit concerning a magazine that by its mere moniker is a knockoff from the fame inherent of the aforementioned artists. My previously intimate relationship with Texas Terri invariably led to my having been introduced to (as well as hanging out with) Suzy of the band L7 and Michael Gilmore (the latter whose fame was accorded not only his tenure with *Rolling Stone* magazine, but whose brother was Gary Gilmore, the very person whose life was portrayed in *The Executioner's Song*, a television film about a rather famous murderer).

...found me snapping polaroid pictures of Texas Terri and Suzy as Tex flashed her tits...

It was at Michael's house in the Hollywood Hills that I first watched *South Park*, a video that at the time was only rumoured to eventually become a series. Needless to say, I laughed my ass off - as did everyone else present - while watching cardboard caricatures of Jesus Christ and Santa Claus fighting to the death (even if it was someone else's death).

Yet another soiree at Michael's house found me snapping polaroid pictures of Texas Terri and Suzy as Tex flashed her tits while both girls stood on a landing behind which was hung a huge wooden Coop two-dimensional sculpture. Needless to say, the red-skinned devil woman was fantastic to behold.

A currently common occurrence for me that's a passive meeting – of sorts - with a celebrity is on days when I get b-movie filmmaker Russ Meyer's mail. He and I have post office boxes at the same Hollywood Station (on Wilcox). Because his box number is 3748 and mine is 3478, we occasionally receive each other's mail. When I get his, I simply give it back to one of the clerks (except, obviously, for this instance), and I suspect he does the same, for I have had some pieces of mail upon which the transposed numbers were noted so that the box clerks could properly replace the items.

I could go on regarding how, many years ago, I was often running into James Hetfield (METALLICA), Gene (DARK ANGEL), Lemmy (into whom I still bump at least once a year) and loads of other rock stars, but it was not exciting then (unless they were friends of mine, like Gene), and I am surprised that I have after all these years cared to dredge up such quaint memories.

More? Well, for a while I lived at In Red Studios (in Orange, California) in the late 1980s, a time during which SLAYER had a permanent rehearsal room and occasionally practiced there. While Kerry, Dave and the lot were nice, the only reason they would pop in to say "Hi" was when they wanted to use my refrigerator to cool their beer.

If my film becomes a cult movie, that's fine with me. Because after all, *culture* begins with *cult*. –Pamela Anderson Lee

celebrity encounters

by darby

Celebrities are certainly what you make of them. I mean, any person that means an awful lot to you, someone who's touched your soul, that might make you stutter, twitch, or simply a bumbling, blathering fool – for you they can be celebrity. And on the flip side, a famous person, one who's never touched you personally, who you might not even like, can still make you stupid, and why? Because they've mutated into something beyond real life? Because you know they've been around / exposed perhaps to more "very important persons" and you feel pressure to say just the right thing that will be new and effectual and somehow break through that celeb veneer and deliver you unto their level? Because you know they mean a lot to so many *other* people and therefore you should feel privileged to be in their company? Because there *is* something innately special about them and even though you can't put your finger on it, or don't see it at all, it still bothers you? Because deep down inside you desire fame or some aspect of it and this could be your big chance for… *what* you don't know, but at least it might make a good story….

Who knows what it is for me? I'd like to say I don't think I care at this point (isn't that what everyone says?). All I know is sometimes when I'm around certain people I do strange things…and it can be entertaining (after the fact). And it can be certain boys or strange individuals or someone I admire who just makes me nervous. Here are a few times when celebrities brought it out of me.

Timothy Leary. It was probably going to be the last time I would see him. The end point where everyone knew he was dying – his body ravaged with cancer – and didn't know how he lasted this long. A party at his house maybe to celebrate his birthday. Tons of people. Tons of famous people I didn't recognize, except Ram Dass only because someone introduced me. I'd talked to Tim a few times previous, usually behind the scenes at some rave-ish musical event, to the point where he'd recognize me, though in tonight's daze I wasn't quite sure. And when he approached, under the pressure of knowing he was dying and that there was nothing in the whole world I could offer a dying man, all I could muster was: "Great pool table." (It *was* a unique pool table.) "What?" he shrugged, snubly disgusted, as if he was thinking exactly what I was thinking: Why was I wasting one of his last precious moments on earth? "I never noticed it."

I avoided him for the rest of the evening, and to distract myself from dwelling on that matter instead stole bottles of water from the bar and danced Tai Qi in the middle of the dance floor with Skylaire the warrior elf, and later danced cowboys with her and Timothy's assistant, our own Howard Hallis. No way to make up for it now.

Simon LeBon. Despite the fact that when Kerin and I went to interview the Duran Duran that fateful day (see *BID* issue #22) I was not nor had I ever been a fan, I eventually became sorta acquaintances with the Duran boys. We saw them play live not long after, when they'd made it big again. The comeback. And the prerequisite pre-party backstage was filled with stars, like Sara Gilbert (another story I haven't room for, but she's a pretty aware woman), Nina Blackman from MTV (looking gnarly and coked out), George Michaels, and just a ton really, whoever they were. Before the show Duran made an official meet-'n'-greet walk around the guests to say their hellos, and when they came by our table Simon gave me a big hug that made Kerin jealous. And smiling and excited I showed Nick the finished product, he being the most human of the bunch (despite the android appearance). Unfortunately I'd forgotten the picture that appeared on the page, of me sitting there at the table during the interview, a sorta slanted grin, with a thought bubble that exclaimed: "What the hell am I doing here?" Nick looked at it, and then I did, and we both looked up at the same moment – me in embarrassment and him wondering why I was so excited to show him this. How could I explain it in the second we had left together? I couldn't. Never did. And though I think that eventually they all read it, the thought bubble was never brought up – not a hint.

After that concert, which wasn't the best thing I ever experienced, I saw them again maybe a year or more later, when they put out that *Thank You* record, a bunch of covers with the "White Lines" remake with Grandmaster Flash's Melle Mel being the stand-out. *Alternative Press* was paying me to do one of their "Mystery Date" columns, where you play the band some new music and they try to guess who the artist is, and that *RayGun* off-shoot *Hum* – which like *Ray Gun* also never paid its writers – wanted me to do an interview as well. (I got the money about two months later after *much* prodding, of course not the full amount.) I was fairly acquainted with them by this point (yes, John was still quiveringly gorgeous), so when Simon came into town sometimes he'd call. We had plans to go to yoga together but it never panned out. One of these times he calls and is very exhausted. He's got all these important things going on and is trying to find a masseuse. "Sure, I know a great masseuse." I hang up and dial every masseuse I know – I think that's three – with no luck. Feeling distraught because I'd so assured him, I called back and said I found someone: "What's your room number?… She'll be there in an hour." When I hung up the phone, I looked at Jessy who was at the office working and overhearing the whole affair, and she just laughed. There was no time for that I laughed back. "HELP!" I was totally exhausted myself, not having slept the night before, and very shaky, which turned into a nervous coffee jitter without the coffee. We got my long red velvet cocktail dress, I piled on makeup while Jessy worked on my big Elvis-penis black sorta bouffant wig, clipping barely-still-alive red flowers from my vase and tucking them into my hair. Violá!

I told him her name was Jezebel or something mysterious like that. My being tired, the look and the name made me appear just a little…off. But I thought there must be so many freaky masseuses running around, why not one like this? I get in the car and my hair keeps hitting the roof and I'm worried it will readjust itself badly. I light a half-smoked cigarette because there's nothing else and inhale deeply, smoking yoga breaths, trying to get rid of that nervous twitch.

When I get to the Beverly Hills hotel where they always stay, I'm pure entertainment fodder for the valet parkers. But I'm in character now, and Jezebel doesn't care. I stick on some dark glasses and saunter my way through to his room, trying not to walk into anything because I can't see behind the shades. Knock knock. Simon opens the door and is at least surprised. I tell him I'm the masseuse in my New Age goth voice and walk right in 'cause I don't want him to look too long and realize it's me. He doesn't. I sit down. He stares for a moment. I think he's figured it out but no, he just can't believe his eyes. We talk, and his sideways doggy glances are just too much. I've only pulled off a few minutes before giggling and he's thinking I'm the weirdest damn masseuse and is wondering what the hell Darby was thinking. And then he sees me, and I take off the glasses. "I couldn't find a masseuse for you." It was comforting to know he was glad to see me, at least compared to this scary woman. I had to wonder if he thought me a stalker or something – he must get so many freaks trying to invade his life. Was I now one of them?!

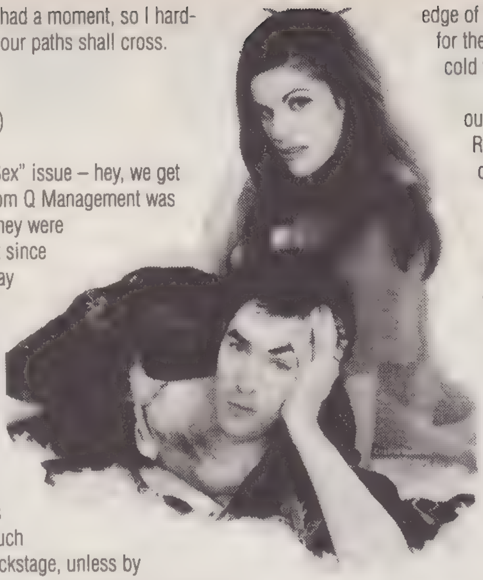
Truth be told, he's got the perfect body: well-proportioned, no fat, he could sell underwear or be a Chinese acupuncture doll, the precise medical prototype for Anatomical Position. And the sweetest little ass – and it's not "my thing" to *ever* say that. I do the massage in costume, in wig. It's hot, I'm getting sweaty, almost dizzy. I try to remember everything a good masseuse has done to me, but I'd only been massaged a couple times myself. I'm not turned on 'cause he's not my type but he's flat-out naked with a hand towel covering that butt and it is kinda distracting.

"It's too bad, I wanted to see your hair," he says. It's long curly red at this point, and when the massage is over I happily remove the 100° wig. He tells me he feels so much better – I feel worse. He gets dressed for this big press conference, black shiny vinyl pants and can't find a shirt. I hand him a *Bunnyhop Magazine* tee that he'd said he liked when I had worn it the last time we met. He puts it on (which makes *Bunnyhop*'s editor Noël happy when he sees signs of his shirt all over TV and celeb-sighting picts during the next few months.) And after all that I didn't even get a tip.

I saw the boys one time after (minus John who'd just quit – though he did call to ask me to listen to his new solo album; I kinda flaked thinking I probably wouldn't like it and didn't want to deal), playing the Sunset Strip Tower Records parking lot for their Tribute Album release (this time swear to god they were actually good!). They were at

I'm not a snob. Ask anybody. Well, anybody who matters. –Simon LeBon the receiving end of much adulation and scarcely had a moment, so I hardly bothered. Maybe when they're in the pits again our paths shall cross. (Is that time now? I'm not a good judge.)

Siouxsie Sioux (See Siouxsie review pg 122)



Billy Corgan once requested a copy of our "Sex" issue – hey, we get cheap thrills from famous fans, why not? Brian from Q Management was trying to arrange getting a copy around the time they were going to play LA, so we delivered it to the concert since Lisa AA and I really wanted to see the show anyway – it was during the success of *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness* (which was lovely) and the Zero peak – but were too shy for some unknown reason, mostly having to do with not being invited and not in the mood to intrude, to deliver it ourselves. (Of course after the fact: "Oh, why didn't you come back stage and introduce yourself etc." – grr! If there's one thing consistent about *Ben Is Dead*, it would be, minus a few occassions here and there, that we were never pushy about such things and therefore were almost never invited backstage, unless by friends – usually having to sneak there last minute to get interviews, to see Very Important Persons be very important, etc.) So we handed the package to some security at the back door – and went home. In it I couldn't help but include a note, explaining away a sort of rude comment in the review of their album in our most recent issue, about his whiny voice. It was only an embarrassing moment in the sense that who knows why I felt the need to even point it out, in a long personalized letter. You get a celebrity who's a fan, and instead of capitalizing on the situation, at least in the sense of self-confidence or self-respect, you find a way to turn it back around so you're the idiot fan. I'd done it once before, and again it was the "Sex" issue that messed me up.

I'd met **Jon Spencer** a few times previous, casually at shows from Long Beach to San Diego, though I don't think there was any formal introduction. Those were the early '90s, and now 1995 or so, we're at a concert for them at the Palace. The show is no good, they're too small for the stage, and it doesn't come off well, but I'd seen them before, knew they were okay in a small club at least, liked their music even though it wasn't something I would listen to beyond the live performance, never heard much Pussy Galore. Live they were foxy. I knew that from the first time I saw Jon walk out of the Bogart's bathroom with lipstick smeared across his lips. The music was secondary, even when it was great.

But still, I had no designs on Jon Spencer, truly never crossed my mind. That is until after the Palace show, when we joined them and a crowd at the Frolic Room #2 – why we were with them I don't recall, though I think I'd been talking to his wife **Christina Martinez** about getting a tape from her for the Kiddie Comp.

And here's where things get ugly but the scenario must be set up first. See, I was horny that night, to be sure, but it was for this boy who I knew would be there. This square peg who stole my heart with his awkward shyness and young hidden brilliance. I thrilled being in his presence. Sure I blew that one too, but that's another story, and he's not famous yet. But I spent practically the entire show looking for him, unsuccessfully. And when we'd gotten to the bar I was really distracted, my mind focused elsewhere, hoping he'd end up there. That is until I went to get a drink, and Jon on a stool at the bar started talking to me – it was nice compensation. He said, "You know, the Blues Explosion was inspired by the "Sex" issue of *Ben Is Dead* ." Well damn, I'm not culturally refined or even genteel on most occasions, and did I mention being completely drunk and thinking myself very hot this evening anyway which made me ever-so-cocky and all that lust burning a hole in my panties got focused upon this specific moment, lost in the sex of this gorgeous boy's eyes, and THOSE LIPS, and for a writer and editor that comment is the nearest thing to a pick-up line you can get!

Now as Don Bolles will later point out, Jon or Christina – I forget which – discussed their supposed swinging and admitted to screwing around with other people in an early issue of *Rollerderby*. Maybe it was only under certain circumstances, maybe it was with each other's approval, but you get the idea. I didn't know this then, but also not being a "fan" per se didn't know much about them at all, even that Jon and Christina were married. After a few minced words and much flirtation I find the question "So, are you and Christina monogamous?" soaring freebird out my mouth before I could catch myself, with every belief he might be just as interested, in the moment. Not certain that I was wanting to do anything – I'm an obscene flirt and born-again virgin.

Now the twist: He was, just a minute before, a fan of mine, and now I've blown the image and have become a fan of his, because it seems as if I want him, and he's still rock star, still in this rock star setting, still the alterna-Elvis. So he gives me this rock-star response: "That's personal," cold and annoyed. *Dang!* Drunk and carefree, momentarily embarrassed but thinking it entertaining at the same time, I return to sit on the edge of the back wall, swinging my legs insolently and continuing to look for the boy I really wished there. And then – *wooosh!* – I catch that dark cold wind, Christina's glare from the other end of the bar.

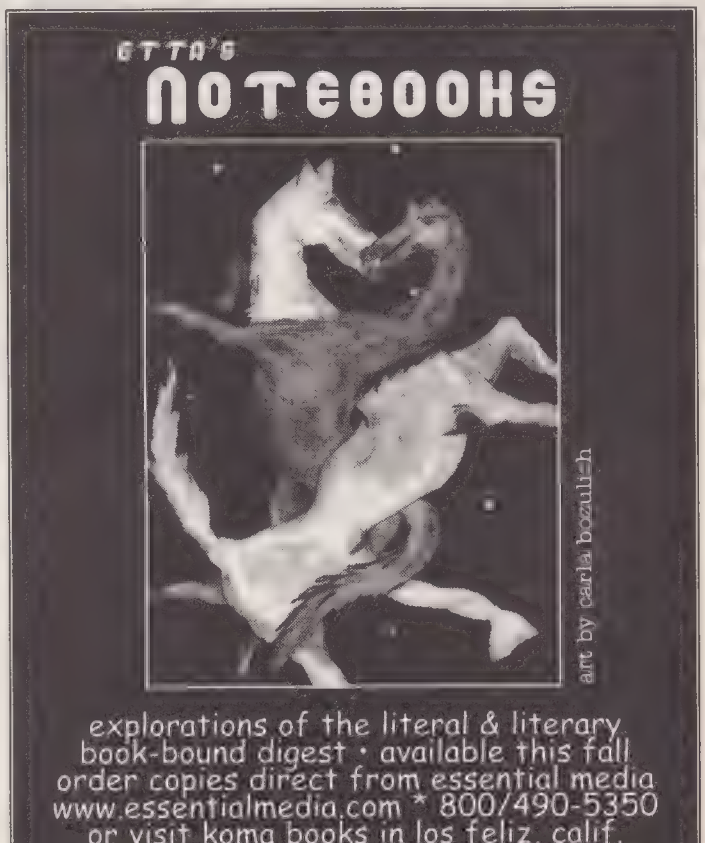
In order to compensate for the humiliation I told it like a humorous story to the people I was with: Don Bolles and the Demolition Doll Rods. "I didn't know they were married!" I recall repeating in my own defense, when they were on the fast-track to teasing me into near guilt.

So the next night we go to the Blues Explosion show at Fuzzyland. It's great this time, we're talking a succinct moment in R&R history. Tight, the audience is practically on the stage with them, all the energy joins together in something wild and, yes, just as fucking sexy as the *Ben Is Dead* "Sex" issue.

And after the show I tell him how great it was, and he's cool and smiling, and then I say, "Hey, sorry about last night," and *wooosh!* a look which screams "You're pathetic," and walks away. Again I escape the humiliation, this time not with drink but because I just discover the boy I was looking for the night before is here now, and we go outside together, hide behind a building, and kiss for the very first time. I should have known there would be repercussions when after a few make-out minutes he threw up all over himself (why does that always happen to me?).

Addendum: A year or so later Noël is doing the Soft 'n' Fluffy issue of *Bunnyhop* magazine and wants me to contribute; to interview Christina of Boss Hog. He says to me the interview is about breasts, he tells her nothing of the sort. I know this little trickster – fully aware of the bar incident – just wants to see what might come of the meeting, and this does not go unnoticed by Christina either. The first thing she says, *"I thought I would scare Noël, tell him I was going to kill you, but he didn't really believe me." "Are you going to kill me?" "I wouldn't. I was just trying to scare him. I think he wanted it to be a potentially provocative situation."* We end up having an initially tense, ultimately pleasant interview. She's just as intense as Jon, which is what makes them such an alluring pair; Noël never runs the interview and I never talk to Christina or Jon again. (p.s. to them: Congratulations on the baby!)

(Yes, I have more but for now I'll spare myself and my real celebrity friends.)



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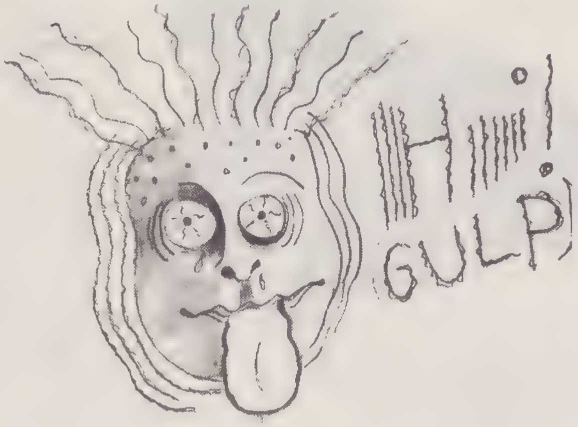
& *Pet My Kitty* (sex, self-deprication, & the crack-up) by darby

A touch of self-esteem prods the beginner to great endeavors. –Erasmus, *Antibarbari*

Celebrities Make Me Tense

by Yvette Bozzini



Despite twenty years of punk rock/kill rock stars ideology, I know that the famous, like F. Scott Fitzgerald's rich, are different from me. I recently read something about Eddie Vedder begging people not to get all nervous about talking to him. The poor guy is just trying to live out that punk ideal and not be a "star." Fat fucking chance. I don't even like Mr. Vedder but I'm sure I'd do something embarrassing if we ever came face to face.

How Could I Do That?

Regrets? I have a few:

#1) I'm 17. I peg a new pair of 501s, get a haircut, and purchase a perfect black camisole for my "date" with Bruce Springsteen. After the show, I wait by the backstage door, in the rain, for hours. When he saunters out and begins amiably chatting with all the assembled 14-year-old boys, I find myself completely unable to speak. Instead, I follow his tour bus, at night, through an unfamiliar city, across an unknown bridge, through a big iron mansion-on-the-hill type gate, and up a long, winding driveway. I sign the guest book, crash the party, and try not to gape at the Warhols on the walls. I stand around until sunrise looking like the entertainment or the help, then I leave without ever having spoken to The Man. [1]

#2) Overcome by the physical proximity of REM visiting my housemates in the next room, I decide to lie down for a few minutes - and wake hours later to find they've gone. [2]

#3) Paul Westerberg. . . . Let's just leave it at that. [3]

How Could They Be So Mean?

Celebrities, like dogs, can sense things. Fearing my Sandra Bernhard in *The King of Comedy* potential, they have been known to go on the offensive:

#4) During a concert, Ian "Porcupine head" McCulloch repeatedly refers to the stupidity of the girl who interviewed him that afternoon. (That would be me). [4]

#5) While signing my copy of her latest book, and after I've screwed up my nerve to share what I thought was a common bond, Jamaica Kincaid, the woman whose first novel I wrote my master's thesis about, laughs and says, "You'll never be a writer!" [5]

#6) Michael Stipe asks me if the 12" he's just picked up is any good. I tell him I like it a lot. He puts it on the turntable and takes it off after about 20 seconds frowning with displeasure. [6]

How Will They Know We Are Soul Mates if I Don't Open My Mouth?

Musicians, writers, and actors I admire bring out the deaf-mute in me. Actually, I don't even have to admire you. If I've seen you on a stage, heard you on the radio, or read you in print, I will behave strangely in your presence.

#7) Before Courtney and superstardom, I see Kurt Cobain talking to two friends of mine. I fail to sweep his frail, sweaty, post-performance perfection into my nice-girl arms, thus leaving him vulnerable to the ravages of that Spungen wannabe. The rest is history. [7]

#8) I attend an Andrea Dworkin talk on the silencing of women and during the question-and-answer period I'm unable to ask my question. [7]

#9) Sally and Jon from the Mekons play a gig. During Sally's set, I patiently wait for her signature Mekons tune, a favorite of mine. It does not come. She asks for requests from the audience and I assume someone will call out for my beloved song. No one does. They request other, inferior songs instead. Sally says, "Please request something else." No one does, especially not me. After the show, do I tell Sally and Jon that I've always wanted to be a Mekon when I grow up? No! Employing the ever-popular and oh-so-mature You Can't Hurt Me If I Act Like I Don't See You strategy, I walk right past the pair in the empty bar without making eye contact or cracking a smile. Take that! [7]

#10) I recently attended a taping of that NPR show "This American Life." I couldn't even talk to host Ira Glass afterwards. Ira Glass! It is hopeless. [7]

1. Don't crash their parties.
2. Don't fall asleep.
3. Don't drink more than they do.
4. Don't offer pithy interpretations of their art.
5. Don't assume you have anything in common .
6. Don't accuse the creative celebrity of plagiarism - which seems to be how Michael Stipe perceived my breathlessly shared discovery that the 7 Chinese Brothers song is a lot like that old fairy tale.
7. Don't be shy.

* * * * *

Yvette does every kind of writing in which it is impossible to feel any kind of personal pride - mainly book jackets and catalog copy for publishers, some PR stuff, and, lately, greeting cards. Yes, greeting cards. She likes to think of it as her character on a sitcom job. In her spare time she likes to write letters to the editor.

art by darby

WHAT'S THE DUMBEST THING YOU! ever said to a celebrity?

I don't know if **JOE MATT** (comic artist *Peep Show*) counts as a celebrity, but if he does: I wanted to sleep with him, so I told him I'd had sex with 30 people, half boys, half girls (at the time I'd had sex with one boy, once). The next day a mutual friend told me that he was utterly repulsed and scared of me and my most certainly disease-ridden body.
– **Ariel Schrag**, cartoonist, *Definition* and *Potential*

My boyfriend walked up to **DARRYL HANNAH** (he thought she was me from behind – we had the same hair) and put his arm around her. When she turned to look at him he said, "you're not my friend."
– **Bridget Miller**, Phil Hendrie fanatic

"Wow! Is that real?" to **BILLY IDOL** as I reached over and touched his leopard-skin pants. They were pleather. • "Oh my god. Your dick must be huge!" to **RICHIE STOTTS** (Plasmatics) upon first meeting him drunk in a club as I looked up at his 6' 7" frame. • "Have you ever fallen to your death off the high wire?" To **TITO WULLENDA** of The Flying Wullendas. • "Aren't you that famous whore?" to **SANDRA BERNHARD** at the Orpheum Theatre in NYC, 1989 • "You owe me a foot" to **NICK CAVE** at Lollapalooza '94 after I dropped his piano on my foot when I was his roadie. – **Chicken John**, game-show host, rabble rouser

"Do you live in LA?" said to **IGGY POP** at Tower Records in San Francisco, 1993. – **Brian Brooks**

I said to **MOBY**, "I'm a bee, what's your animal?" (Duh, a whale.) – **Janine Papp**

To **DR. DEMENTO** (aka Barry Hansen) while he was shopping for rare comedy records at Rhino Records in Westwood when Sonic Youth had a party for their release of "GOO" on DGC Records in 1990: "Thanks to your show, [the Dr. Demento Show] I started listening to rock music." Being an anti-rock 'n' roll fan, the Good Doctor replied with: "(Ha! Ha!) Is that supposed to be a compliment?!" in a stern and not very good-humored way.
– **Carlos "Cake" Nunez**, *Flipside* magazine

After **RAUL JULIA** told me about how he'd accidentally popped his eyeball out of its socket while rubbing it at the dinner table, I said "Really? I wish I could have been there!"
– **Emily Feinstein**

"I liked that one line of the poem you read, I forget what it was." (to **HENRY ROLLINS**)
– **Erik [Gearik] Mattheis**

"Nice suit!" to **DONALD TRUMP** (and I meant it). – **Jeff Fox**, editor *Barracuda*

"Could I have your autograph?" The only time I ever uttered these horrific words was to **DAVID BOWIE**. I once shared a 747 cabin with the "thin white duke". Once we arrived in the small airport in Maui he was struggling with two large suitcases, so I grabbed one and walked with him to a waiting Jeep. I just happed to be listening to the then new "Tin Machine" on my Walkman – and yes, I asked him to sign it. Ohhh! • I once told mega-monster art star **JULIAN SCHNABEL** that "I really liked his paintings." What could I do, I was stuck in an elevator with him and was really thinking that he was so fat and the worst painter! – **Dani Tull**, artist

I once went up to **WHOOPI GOLDBERG** and said, "Uh. Oh, hey. I know (name withheld)." She looked at me as if I were from another planet. "So?" she said. "So," I said, "well, I just thought that was interesting. That we both know her." I kind of just stood there and she walked away.
– **Marcelle Karp**, editor *Bust* magazine

Once I met **TINA BROWN**, who was then editor of the *New Yorker*. I was at a journalism awards dinner. She was getting an award. I saw her talking to someone, so I thought I would say hello. I had just done this piece for *Spy* in which I mailed fake fan letters to celebrities but only put their name or their photo on the envelope. Then I gave them points for how long it took the envelope to be returned to me as undeliverable, or big points if it didn't come back, and bigger points if they answered the letter with a signed photo. It was a complicated experiment, hard enough to explain when you're sober and impossible when you're blitzed. But I gave it my best, telling Tina all about it, since I had included her in the 50 or so celebrities. I lied and told her that she had finished among the most famous. Actually, she had tied for least famous with Charles Manson, which meant all the letters sent to her had been returned almost immediately. I don't remember exactly what I said but I do remember looking down at my arm as I laughed at something I had said, and then looking up and she was all the way across the room engaged in conversation with someone else. And there was **GAIL SHEEHY** looking up at me, very earnest and interested. She was nice, even to a drunk stranger. Then again, she hadn't been a part of my celebrity experiment. Tina, if you're reading this, please forgive me. • Jake Austen and I were interviewing **KISS** for the magazine where I work. There was a knock on the hotel suite door and I answered it and there was this huge figure standing there. I said, "Are you Tommy?" because I was expecting the manager. And he said, "No, I'm Gene." I doubt many yahoos fail to recognize Gene Simmons, even without his make-up. – **Chip Rowe**, the Playboy Advisor, editor *Chip's Closet Cleaner*

To **SOON YI PREVIN** (of Woody Allen fame) in the Chinese restaurant Shun Lee on the upper East Side of NYC. Woody was at a table, and she went to the bathroom, so my friend and I followed her. She knew we were staring at her. I mumbled "Uh, hi, I like your, uh, boyfriend's movies." Really.
– **Judy Jade Miller**, chatty owner Wigbox Publicity

"Give me back my calculator!" to **BOBBY BROWN**, in 4th grade.
– **Josh Glenn**, editor *Hermenaut* magazine

"Can I see your i.d.?" to **CHRISTINA APPLEGATE**, when she wanted to buy cigarettes from me at the newsstand where I worked. – **Joan Kelly**, writer

Said to **KENNY G** when he came to rent a movie at my pathetic suburban place of work: "Can I have your autograph?"
– **Jessica Gruner**, writer

I recently pissed off that guy in the Tabasco commercial (you know, the one where some fat dude is eating pizza with tabasco sauce in a swamp, and the mosquito sucks some blood, takes off and explodes?) by saying, "Hey, aren't you that dude in the Tabasco commercial?" I don't know why this pissed him off, but he certainly made sure to glare at me every time I had to see him thereafter. • As for just plain stupidity, I totally boned when I met **GARRY SHANDLING**. He was prattling on to his secretary about how his Chinese food was wrong and that if John called he was not to be disturbed and that he really needed to talk to Mike – when he stopped, looked over at me sitting in the corner and said, "Hey. What's the word?" To which I replied, "Guh?" – leading him to smile his pained Gary smile and walk out with a, "Yeah, I've had days like that." Boy, sure felt good after that one. – **Matt Berman**

Every time I encounter a celebrity, my brain goes into some kind of coma and I say things that are really, really strange and disturbing, things that make me sound like I'm on some major drugs. Here are just a few of my favorites: To **TERRY GILLIAM**, when he noticed my sketchbook and asked if I was an artist: "Um, yeah... well, we all try." • To *Wings* star Steven Webber, when he asked if I watched the show: "Um, well, I, sometimes, sure, I guess, yeah. Well... no, not really. (Ha ha) Sorry." • To **DARBY** (who was a celebrity to me at least): "Hey, look! We have the same profile!" • Finally, there was the entire conversation I had with **DUSTIN HOFFMAN**, in which we both sounded pretty stupid. I was sitting behind the counter at the movie theater where I used to work, when Dustin walked in. I admit it, I was gawking – I mean, it's not every day that Rainman/Tootsie/Ratso Rizzo walks into your life – when he REALLY blew my mind by coming right up to me and saying, "Hello, Greg" in that sad Dustin Hoffman voice. I'd never met him before in my life, so I was a little puzzled about how he knew my name. He explained that not only had we met before, but that we'd talked for some time, and I'd even given him some free popcorn. This really perplexed me; had I actually had an entire conversation with one of the most famous guys alive, given him popcorn, and forgotten it? This was just too odd. Maybe this was all some sort of prank, and I was on *Candid Camera!* Maybe I was imagining this whole conversation. I was still trying to figure it out when Dustin cleared his throat expectantly, and I realized he was waiting for me to give him some free popcorn. I went ahead and scooped up a big bucket for him (what can I say, I DO think he's a really good actor) and sent him in to see the movie. As he walked away, he gave me this look that was kind of sad, like he was bummed that we'd had this long chat before and I'd forgotten the whole thing. He was probably thinking, "Ah, once I was a star, but that's all over now, my public has forgotten me..." He probably cried through the whole movie. A few days later I found out that the theater's previous manager had ALSO been named Greg, and that he'd more or less fit my description. I'm glad to know that the whole thing wasn't just some strange hallucination, but now I can never watch a Dustin Hoffman movie without remembering that little shlubby guy angling for free popcorn. – **Greg Stacey** (the artist formerly known as Stymie Baldwin)

Reporter: "Did you realize you have five gold albums in Germany and Austria?" *David Hasselhoff:* "Where's Austria?"

I'm generally pretty well behaved around celebrities, but I did go on and on once to **KEANU REEVES** about how stupid I thought the screenplay to Bram Stoker's *Dracula* was, before he rather shamefacedly admitted that he was in the movie. I still think the screenplay was stupid, so I don't feel too bad about it. I think in the realm of celebrities, it's best not to have too many opinions.
– **Lisa McElroy**, writer, filmmaker

I'm probably too late for this, but the dumbest thing I said to a celebrity that I remember was when I was at Sundance in 1992 as a dumb film student and met **MICHAEL STIPE** at a party. I said, "I kind of work for you." He said, "Really?" I said, "Yeah, I work at Tower Records." His attention was taken away by some film executive so I never knew his reaction. Five years later my film was playing at Sundance, and I was sitting with the cast of *Nowhere* in some restaurant when Stipe sat down next to the cutest guy there. I said, "You were one of the only people who didn't totally ignore me at Sundance when I was there as a film student." He grunted and turned away, ignoring me. I feel just as stupid now writing it down as I did both times talking to him.
– **Sarah Jacobson**, writer/director, *Mary Jane's Not A Virgin Anymore*

Hi, you look really familiar.
– **Nancy Nathan**, Director of Photo, *Men Freshmen Unzipped*

The stupidest thing I ever said to a celebrity, really drunk, and at Al's bar, of course, was, "Fuck, man, you look like **BILLY ZANE**." It WAS Billy Zane. • We were talking about Freddy Krueger movies with our friend who was in one of 'em. I said "Man, I'd like to sleep with the death rock one from Freddy 3. That girl is hot!" Our pal who was in that movie goes, "Oh, you mean her?" and taps the girl on the other side of me on the shoulder, who turned out to be the death rock chick from Freddy 3. I about spit up my drink. • Or when I saw **JOHNNY DEPP** at the Viper Room. A girl I was with said, "Hey, it's Johnny Depp," and I looked over and saw that it was indeed him. I said "So it is." He looked at me. I said "I thought you'd be a lot taller." He didn't say a word, just turned around.
– **Nick Popdefect**

(During CMJ press conference, 1988) to **SIOUXSIE SIOUX**, "Can I bum a dollar for the subway?" – **Kevin Chanel**, editor *ChinMusic!*

I was at Chin-Chin on Sunset interviewing a porn star named **SKY** when a table of heavy-hitting celebrities sat down next to us. I knew they were famous, really super-famous, but I didn't know their names. One looked a little bit like Ben Stiller, but he was really tall and had spiky hair, and one had a goatee and had recently played a bad guy somewhere. These were the kind of famous people that you know you've seen in a million movies, but you never really cared enough to stay for the credits and find out who they were. But you've seen them in the pages of *Maxim* and in the gossip columns of the *LA Times*. Anyway, there they were at Chin-Chin, which is not unusual. Chin-Chin is the kind of place where heavy-hitting celebs go to retain their anonymity or just to falsely assume that no one will recognize them. Citizens who go to Chin-Chin know the rules, are cognizant about how to keep their adulation in check, so celebs can go there and know that they won't be bothered, with fans asking for their autographs and stuff. So, this table is like 12 inches from us. Sky is yodeling on about how she got arrested for stripping on the Penzoil yacht the week before and how her new boobs are, like, so awesome. And these celebs are rolling their eyes, like, there goes the neighborhood. Doesn't Chin-Chin do a background check before they take your order? And then **VINCE ROCKLAND**, gay porn star, appears and joins our table, and I whisper to him, totally blasé, "Don't look now, but those people sitting next to us are Famous, and, just out of curiosity, do you know who they are?" And he stares and I try to sink into my chop suey and he says, totally *not* whispering, "Well the woman is **JUDY DAVIS**," and I'm like, "SHUT UP, she can totally hear you." And he's like, "No she can't, they're not paying attention." And I'm like, "DON'T SAY *THEY!*" And Sky is flirting, HARDCORE, with the waiter, and I'm thinking, this is why there are mountains, to keep The Valley out of civilization. Then, to really make me insane, Vince Rockland takes out his cel phone and calls his ex-girlfriend to tell her that he was sitting at Chin-Chin at a table next to Judy Davis. Sitting, really, like eight inches from her. Mortified is not strong enough a word for how I felt that instant. Not OK: cel phones at restaurants, letting celebrities know you recognize them, impulsively calling ex-girlfriends, showing off your new boob-job over Chinese food. – **Lisa AA**, sex writer

When I was interviewing **JERRY SEINFELD**, he wasn't being particularly funny off the cuff, so I asked him if he had any observations he wanted to share, a preview of the sort of thing he'd be talking about in his show when he comes through Chicago. And he says, "So, you want MATERIAL!" Then he told me a joke about going to a mall.
– **Hugh Hart**, editor *TV Quest*

I can't take credit for this, but I was there when it was said. My friend Rick Elfman had a small dinner party eight or so years ago. I didn't know him that well at the time, but was invited nonetheless. Party guests included **BUD CORT** from the infamous *Harold and Maude* movie. Somehow conversation came up about the film, and I couldn't wait to mention that it is to date my favorite movie, and my friend I brought to the small party of 10 said, "What ever happened to that guy anyway...?" There was a moment of strong silence, then I whispered in her ear, "He's sitting across the table from us, Amy." • Personally, I was invited to the *Playboy* Mansion in the early '80s on several occasions. They were dinner-then-movie parties…consisting of models (that barely touched the food or ate super-small portions, careful not to mess up their lipstick) and a few bunnies, to boot. Well, I was in punk rock mode, with a bad attitude. My friend and I pigged out, headed for the booze, then left before the movie was even over. But, one time I said very sarcastically to **HEFF**, "Nice robe..." Pretty stupid, 'cause he's actually a cool guy. • Some of my gay pals got ahold of tons of celebrities' phone numbers about 10 years ago and prank called all of them on X-mas '89. **CLORIS LEACHMAN** stayed on the phone with my now dead friend **CURTIS YORK** for over 20 minutes thinking he was someone else, then she asked, "So what are you doing right now anyway...?" He replied casually, "Oh, I just finished performing a home abortion on a friend of mine, and you?" – **Kari French**, performance artist, Barbie specialist, party giver

Reporter: "Did you visit the Parthenon during your trip to Greece?" Shaquille O'Neal: "I can't really remember the names of the clubs that we went to."

CARLA BOZULICH

ten years ago – not long after *Ben Is Dead* began – we were putting on *Ben Is Dead* events at an ex-strip club on Hollywood Blvd. Our first "Extravaganza" was a nice smorgasbord; something like: Slug, Distorted Pony, Stereotaxic Device, Warworld (Brad Bohonus), My Sin (Stan Fairbanks), artist Kalynn Cambell's 3-D slide show upstairs, and a few renegade clowns (Stephen Holman and Clam as Torture Chorus). And then there was Ethyl Meatplow. Amongst all the noise and clamor they stood out. It was one of their first shows.

Looking back in the old issues of *Ben Is Dead* (it's not a habit), I notice in practically each a review of Ethyl Meatplow. We were kinda emerging side by side, different formats sprouting from the urban underground. Blah blah blah. But when I look closer what I notice more specifically was that the girl who was 1/3 of this band was almost never mentioned in these early reviews. This girl, who even though she was one of the two singers (and did write or co-write some of their best songs), seemed to sort of be lumped in, in terms of status, as one of the sex-dancer faction that was part of the band's regular sideshow. Even an interview we did with them early on revealed this phenomenon: the other two band members themselves somehow forgot to mention there was a third member – and forgot to mention to her they were doing an interview. Her only mention, as a matter fact, came in the caption of a photo that appeared within. As the years progressed though, it became obvious. And almost every Meatplow picture we printed thereafter featured *only* Carla. And one might guess a whole lot of the audience both gay and straight of each sex went to the Meatplow shows again and again and again just to see her. Her bluesy, coarse, almost male vocalizations. Her sexy S&M outfits (just kidding!). But let's get it straight. As much as Carla might have seemed intimidating with that voice and her big black biker boots and cabaret apparel, the petite gamine goddess could have been the real instigator of the baby-doll fad early '90s.

Lucky Strike photo: Alicia Exum, 1992

And that's how I see Carla. When I look back on the last decade of music (and fashion and foresight), she *was* one of the most important figures. And I remember the flocks of boys who would crowd around her any time I saw her in public (she claims to have been oblivious to this). But it wasn't only her creativity and looks but the combo of these and some smarts. Whenever they played a show – and they always seemed to hook up with the best touring bands – she would personally call and invite you. What a tactic! She was also an extreme flirt. Sex was a device and it was used. For as many times John Napier pulled his lil' weenie out during a Meatplow gig, it was Carla's salacious sexual innuendoes which had each and every audience member (and friend) under her spell (not to mention when she'd squirt liquid right out of her vagina onto the audience – um, you'd have to read the "Sassy" issue for details, and a great photo).

Somehow and I don't know when, she started to contribute to *Ben Is Dead* (with both positive and detrimental results). Her interviews for the "Sex" issue were the highlight. She later wrote short stories, put together *Ben Is Dead's* first and only fashion spread, and became the first paid proofreader when she had spare time and needed extra dough. She could take the most disorganized lengthy piece of…work, absorb all the pieces in their essence, and intuitively place them where they belonged, cutting the excess with total awareness. But it was with her very personalized prose on Mahler in our "Death" issue that she garnished the most attention, and which she has not been able to live down (it's entirely my fault – when she wanted to pull it in the last hour I convinced her she was being chicken).

When Carla was feuding with John about wanting to play guitar in the band I couldn't see why she'd rock the boat – what did she know about guitar?! When the Fibbers played their first few LA shows I completely understood. And though it's unfortunate for those fans who never got to see Meatplow live, the Fibbers was the first place the now-confident Carla created for herself to really live out the potential. And it was a much more special place.

There are a few certain people that have some unique sense. It's a connection with something beyond the cliché of generic life. And so without trying, she can stand out. I'm not saying the girl's perfect or has had the perfect life – far from it. It's just when I sat down to think about the people who were close to me who I felt attained a certain celebrity, Carla Bozulich consistently came to mind.

ABOVE: Carla's favorite photo of the Geraldine Fibbers, 1996 ("except the violinist turned out to be a rotten egg"). Photo by Kate Gardner

We eat the requisite huevos rancheros at La Abeja and then take a drive out of the city in search for a magical waterfall.

Darby: Why don't we just start with some of the people you think have celebrity, in your perspective, because I don't think celebrity necessarily means the person has to be famous. We all have our own perspectives…

Carla: Hmm. Really? Oh. Well, I don't associate celebrity with anything except famous at least in some context.

I know, but I put the context sometimes individually, considering for example that I have a 20 page Chokebore interview in this issue and nobody but me is going to care.

So they're celebrities for you.

They're celebrities for me, and then it also shows that you can turn anyone into celebrities.

I know that, because there are people that think I'm a celebrity.

Right.

Which they're out of their ever-lovin' mind. But, you know, god love 'em.

You embrace your fans do you?

And it's so funny, people always think Nels (Cline, Carla's boyfriend and bandmate) is making a living at music. I mean, does that have some part of the equation?

It does. Why isn't he?!

If you're making a living…I mean you can't be a celebrity and not be making a living at what you're doing, can you?

No, well, yeah, of course.

I'm just kidding I know.

The perfect celebrity is the failed one.

It's so funny because Nels and I are both so pathetic in that way…but happy.

So tell me, who are celebrities to you?

I just can't see the point of that. What the hell does it matter? I don't know, for me, if I'm too shy or self-conscious or frightened or scared or phobic or feel every fight-or-flight instinct in my whole being rise up like the hairs on the back of my neck and prick me…then the person in front of me is probably a celebrity.

And do they have to be famous for that to happen?

Yes. [laughs] Pretty much. But not famous in terms of mainstream notoriety.

Right, so then I'm asking you…

No, because a lot of those people wouldn't matter to me.

So who makes the hair stand up on your neck?

I don't know. Everybody that has any recognition…oh no, aaahhhh. I just hate…I can't stand celebrity. I hate it. And a lot of times it's been really bad because I hate people without even giving them a chance, which is so awful. I think that's shameful, I really do.

Because they're famous?

Yes. I mean, people that a lot of people think are really cool. Like the Beastie Boys. I had many opportunities to meet them, and I've always made a snap judgement, like fuck them. But really what it is, is that I'm scared. I'm just scared. I'm scared they're going to dis me, or whatever. 'Cause I used to be a really *really really* shy person, like incredibly painfully shy. So now I think that it doesn't manifest itself that often, but that is one of the situations where it does it in a weird backhanded way, where I'm like copping a snobby attitude or something but really it's just that I'm shy… (Laughs) You know what I mean? You *doo?* Mmm. Well, and then another thing is that that has happened to me so many times, like with people that I admired, where they did talk shit to me or about me or treat me 2nd rate. I know it's just that they don't know me…

It's just because you have some sort of celebrityness in their eyes?

It is not enough to become admired, one must also be forgiven for it. –Comtesse Diane (1898)

No, I don't think so. No, I think it's just the opposite of that. I think it's more that I don't have any celebrity and they don't think I should and they think I'm trying to grab some, or something.

Mmmm.

But I'm not.

You're not?

I think I was, though, a couple times. There was a couple times in my life where I was, but I'm certainly not now, oof, no.

Explain.

Um, well, there was a time where I…Remember when we were in the car and I said I was Pygmalion? That I was like Liza Whatever-her-butt in *My Fair Lady.* So…I've had just such a funny life. It's been so dense with extreme incidences. With not even a chance to breathe inbetween – for a lot of it. I feel like that's over with, though, that I'm completely over it – it's great, I'm so happy about that. But anyway, I'm a person that's a real true life, kinda Cinderella story. A filthy guttersnipe that rose out of the ashes. I put myself back together and have a really great life and there's all this stuff inbetween there that happened and part of it was me playing music and trying to figure out what I wanted to do while I was doing it. I wanted to make a decent living at it, but I didn't want to give up any of my belief system which is really really firmly grounded in art. And I'm completely idealistic, I always have been, before I even understood that was my identity or anything. I'm really idealistic about art. So a couple times I veered into where I thought maybe the Geraldine Fibbers were going to have a shot at getting on the radio, selling more…I think we sold like 20,000, of each of our albums, which was a huge amount of sales for us, but for the record company it was pathetic. But it looked a couple times like we might cross into the couple hundred sales range. I mean they definitely thought we were, at least at first. And I had to think about that a lot, and think if I could handle it. Because I like to be pretty private in my life. Now I don't know if it would really matter as much because I don't feel as paranoid but I just don't think I'm willing to, really. I don't know for sure 'cause I do change my mind a lot. But as it stands right now I'm pretty determined to make a living where I don't have to…anyway, the music that I'm interested in is so many light years from anything you can hear now on the radio or MTV, or even in a lot of ways anything you could ever hear on commercial radio. Maybe on public radio, but I feel like naturally I'm veering away from that and I don't want to go in a way that's not natural for me, just to make money. Which doesn't mean that I'm not going to make another Geraldine Fibbers album or that I'm not going to make a pop record or anything like that. I just don't want to consider whether it'll get on the radio or not. We can just pretty much assume that it won't, you know. I feel like it's much better to not be on the radio. Because I just think the radio's diseased right now, and I don't want to be diseased…any more than I already am.

RIGHT: Rock stars in Tulsa, Oklahoma: Ethyl Meatplow was a rare escape in the early '90s for punk rock fags in the Bible Belt. If you missed them live, you fucking MISSED it.

BELOW RIGHT: E.M. 1988
Photo by Annabelle Port

ABOVE: Ethyl Meatplow 1988, with dancer Jim Reva (1962-1996). Not just any dancing queen! Very clever people got the humor/genius of the hairy go-go dancer who somehow always had one black eye. And so LOVABLE. By night he was an Ethyl Meatplow dancer, by day Carla was his personal assistant. Photo by Annabelle Port

The record company…before they dropped you they were giving you options; saying here are some ways that you can be a best seller.

They offered to keep me under contract and drop the rest of the band.

The Geraldine Fibbers didn't seem that far off from being able to be played on the radio. I'm not trying to say they weren't unique songs and I understand the album was way too diverse to be overall excepted, but I can see one song could have been plucked out of there and played to the masses and them getting it.

Yeah, well they made a lot of mistakes with that. I mean that's a department with the record company, I'm sure you know this, the promotions department. And the promotions department basically made a fiasco of the project. Like really insane, like Three Stooges kind of mistakes that are just embarrassing.

What were the top few?

After we released our second album we went on tour and they refused to release the single to radio because The Verve was breaking. They were like, "No, we can't work your album right now because The Verve are huge in Europe and we want to break them in the United States. So we're not going to release your single." So we're touring away in the van, which is the way that we lived, so it wasn't like we were resenting it. So some time went by and we said, "Come on now, it's been a month, release our single." And they said "No, because Blur is breaking now." And so we just kinda threw a fit. After two months we were like, "You gotta release our single to radio. You have to mail it out." So everybody decided that "California Tuffy" was the single. That right there is arguable at this point. They decided that they wanted to edit the instrumental section of the song. And the reason why it wouldn't really make a good single is because there are two instrumental sections – it's just not the regular format of a song you hear on the radio, and the instrumental section was in a different time signature than the rest of the song; that's just absolutely out of the question. That's breaking a cardinal rule. So the head of promotions at Virgin decided that the instrumental sections were too long so he took it home on his home studio, because he was having delusions of being an engineer that week, and he edited it on his home studio. We were on tour, we were in Indiana or something. They sent us a tape of what he did, with a letter like "How do you like this?" We had total control in our contract over everything. We had control over all the artwork, all the music, all the final releases, all the singles, everything. We put the tape on, we heard this edit that he did – he edited right in the middle of a bar, just chopped it out in the most bizarre of all ways that was just completely unmusical. It was as if you would be dancing to a song and then suddenly trip over a huge rock and break your nose – and not in a good way.

As opposed to the good way of breaking your nose.

Yeah. And so we pulled over immediately and called them and we were like, "No we don't like it, we hate it, it's terrible, it's awful. I don't know what you were thinking with this but you're out of your mind." And they were like, "You don't like it?" And we were like, "No, we don't like it, we hate it, it's stupid, it's not music this way." And they were like "Uh, oh shoot, damn, well we already mailed out 2000 of those to radio. We pressed them up and mailed them all out to radio like that."

And how long was it before you stopped crying?

Well, I tried to get our manager and our record company to run interference for that – 'cause it was a huge fuck-up, massive massive fuck-up 'cause the song sounded like shit. I mean if there was anybody listening to see if a song sounded good before programming it for the radio, which is doubtful, because obviously it's all who's blowing who, but, if there was anybody listening – and we weren't blowing anybody either – so I gotta say it was all about whether the song was any good and they had fucked up the song beyond belief. So I tried to get them to run interference and my plan was like a hare-brained scheme that might work but would involve embarrassing somebody and it wasn't us. I tried to get them to agree to press up another one immediately, remail them out with a press release that blamed somebody at the record company, but a fictional character, like they had had a psychotic episode…try to make a kinda publicity stunt out of it. Like, instead of blowing our whole musical career why don't we turn it on its head and try to make it be a stupid publicity stunt to make somebody notice who we are. So I had this whole elaborate idea that I came up with at the phone booth standing there on the side of the road in Indiana somewhere. And everybody was like "Yeah, yeah, sure, we'll do that." [laughs]

And the people at the record company didn't take your calls from then on.

Pretty much. It was pretty much over at that point. We just had to go through the drips and dregs of the whole thing. And then the end of the story is me sitting around with my A&R guy, who has replaced the guy that signed us. You know the old story, right, the A&R guy signs you and then quits six months later. And he gets replaced with some guy who doesn't even…when I had my first meeting with this guy we were talking and I was like Blah blah blah, bluh bluh bluh Sonic Youth bluh bluh bluh. And he was like "Who's that?" And I'm like Great, great, we're going to be off to a really *smashing* start here. You know. So anyway, this is a year later with this guy and I'm sitting down with them and he says "Carla, I believe you've got a great future ahead of you." And I said "Well, thank you John." And he says, "'Your contract is going to be coming up for renewal or be dropped in the next two weeks." And I was like, "Yeah, I know that, what are you going to do? You said you were going to keep the band." He said "Yes, we will keep the band, but if you want to pursue a solo career (he'd been talking to me about a solo career for the past six months) we could drop the band and then sign you the next day, back to the same contract, so that you would have every-

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Any star can be devoured by human adoration, sparkle by sparkle. –Shirley Temple Black

THE UNMAPPABLE SPACE ORDINARY CORPOREAL LIFE, IN

by Steve Gregoropoulos

FROM: "STEVE GREGOROPOULOS" TO: "BENISDEAD" <BENISDEAD@EA

>VISUALS FOR MARK E STYLE PIECE. ANY THOUGHTS.

DO YOU HAVE ANY FALL PICTURES? I DON'T KNOW WHAT WOULD BE GOOD
GOOD STUFF. AT LEAST I'VE ALWAYS ASSUMED YOU CAME UP WITH IT. DO
I'M NOT SO GOOD AT THIS. ALL I COULD THINK OF IS, MAYBE WE COULD D
EUGENE CHADBOURNE, JAD FAIR, KIM GORDON, THE TWIN GIRL FROM TH
FROM DETAILS, STEVE BUSCEMI, ALL THE LOW-FI CELEBS ON SOVIET-ST
WELL. AND NO PICTURE OF MARK E. SMITH BUT A PICTURE OF BIGGIE SM
ELSE WE'D BLUR OUR OWN MESSAGE. ALSO WE COULD DELIBERATELY BLU
ATHLETES PLAYING AT SPORT (ANDRE AGASSI, HIDEO NOMO, FLO JO, ET
CAN GOTHIC POSE? AN 8X10 OF THAT MILK HOTEL GROUP WITH THE MAN
A VAMPYRE MARTYR-MAKER – IT'S GOTHIC IN NATURE – I HAVE NO VISU
EYES TO LOOK MOURNFUL – GOETHE – THE VIETNAM WALL – I HAVE NO ID
I CAN HEAR IT. THEY SHOULDN'T PUBLISH THEIR LETTERS. OR KEEP THEM

Early '80s in Boston, standing by the side of Pat Clarke, then road manager, first person I knew to fully experience demise borne of the HIV virus/death in early '80s and so forth, but on this night a band I'd heard on the radio but never known, at least in the encyclical sense, soundchecking in a musicianly manner, hunched and serious, and I'm filled with begrudging acceptance.

Cavernous abscess, a blush of feedback. "Don't worry," I leaned over and shouted in the ear of the guy at my other side, a somewhat blushing young man with a pasty face; "Everything sounds like that in here." Which was true, it was a notoriously hideous-sounding room and every important act of the day suffered for it. He laughed in a friendly relieved way and in a couple of minutes bounded onto the stage and started giving instructions and checking microphones.

The song had a sort of Greek chorus where the band members answered the vocal in odd rhythmic declarations, and an elegant, ornate structure you'd never have predicted from those first radio transmissions which had been easily mistaken for so many mannered explorations of the same declamatory style; still, there was no way to foresee this pleasant and extremely interesting friend of Pat's as a nascent demigod who'd linger over my life and work and everybody else's as well.

Later that day he explains the song is about the followers of a guy named Ludd who'd led a revolt against the industrial revolution that had rendered his home town of Manchester a vast expanse of urban tundra. He's bookish - jokes about being bookish - even referring to himself in the third person - I'm bookish but a high-school dropout and the ambivalence and wicked superstition of smashing the infernal machine stayed/stays to this day.

I still get emails from my estranged wife – like the young man in the bar that was called Spit – a writer, saying her heart goes out to the Unabomber but it's beyond words now.

At the time, it was just the onset of a mostly fun week I spent with the Fall, that had jousting, drinking, more jousting, Mark bagging on modern architecture and sounding like Prince Charles, laughing at the signs at the Bunker Hill monument and me giving Mark and Kay shit about "Brits Out" scrawled in phosphorescent spray paint on an overpass by a false-IRA southie.

But for a brief encounter at Folk City in about 1986, I never saw him again except on stage; however, in the ensuing years as whatever week I was a tiny part of probably erased itself from Mr. Smith's recollection several times over, Mark loomed larger and larger over the rest of the world, crossing from the periphery in which I live into the neighborhood of infinity – which he named, and which is called celebrity.

This happens a lot to those of us on the periphery, from which particular vantage point the other side looks like a nightmare tunnel, an actual reconstruction of the human soul into digital samples, pixels, gifs and billboards, live and dead. We are constantly poking into celebrities and then recovering ourselves: our damaged files.

One time, after being extremely ditched, I even stumbled into a crush on one. She sang in a band I'd never heard but had known of at least in the encyclycal sense: a person this time and not literature. You'd best be careful being kind to the recently ditched. Wake of a wrenching violent split-up: a party under a restaurant; the poor girl walks out of a cloud of smoke and ties a string around me and I rise from the land of the dead and walk on clouds for a while resuscitated and much better. Then, a week or so later, I saw a lovely photo of her, full profile, in a major newspaper.

Well, if you think courting sucks, and you think celebrity sucks, you should try courting a celebrity. The awkwardness and horrifyingness of trying enough to get to know someone you're fond of in the first place, when you start to notice that person looking back at you from magazine racks, you become downright insane. You just can't possibly know the rules, and, eventually, you can't play.

Usual few pathetic attempts an enamored fellow makes; probably more of them than otherwise just because of the equivocal set-up/restless search for unsoiled intent, ultimately unsuccessful; a mighty show of extraordinary good nature from the woman considering what an annoying ox I was being; and then she moved away, a happy resolution for all concerned.

However: Just imagine a similar scenario from the visto of the crush, where, rather than benevolent tolerance, you actually like someone. How could you even trust them? Would they display such attention if you weren't haunting them through the print media? Are your eyes your own, or are they enlargeable into discrete squares, replaceable color by color?

Or is the impurity of such affection a mirror of the impurity and prostitution behind all of our supposed love; if you are the celebrity, do you see the true brittle nature of things, and simply go home?

Cut to April of this year: Elizabeth my same estranged wife emails me a news story about Mark E. Smith, who is missing, with a black eye. Dee Pop of the Bush Tetras tells the press that she doesn't have much hope for Mark or the Fall, and that he's in sorry shape.

Bad on so many fronts: First, this person should survive, physically;

I said [to Mike Wallace], in my memory, Martin Luther King was getting to be old hat just before his assassination…and so was Ghandi, and that people who change the world are monomaniacs almost by definition. –Mr. Eisendrath on Jack Kevorkian

BETWEEN CELEBRITY AND WHICH CELEBRITY GERMS BREED

THLINK.NET> Subject: Mark as Unibomber Date: Thu, 3 Sep 1998

visuals for a magazine article; however, you usually seem to come up with
the contributors illustrate the pieces? Or do you do it together with them?
a so-called underground cult of personalities spread with billboards of
Pixies and that horrible metal-pop outfit, Jello Biafra, the sex columnist
le billboards, advertising purity and entry-level marketing. And Lady Di as
lls to represent mark. These two would be the only international stars, or
r our own message by using only action shots of counterculture sanctioned
). These people are quite good-looking. B.I.G. and Brix together, in an ameri-
agement address showing? John Kennedy Toole? Orville Reddenbocker? Pretty much the piece has me as
l sense of it – the equivalent of high-school kids after the fatal crash wearing tiger-balm under their
er. All these people from Beethoven on down have always told me about this suffering and now I feel like
or whatever. In my craft or sullen art at night while the lovers lie abed. Put a picture of a hospital.

second, is the wave of personal concern intrusive or is it part of the problem to be personally concerned for someone whose personality has lingered in a decade-and-a-half-old air-mix from which your own has faded?; third, survival as an artist: last year we lost Bill Burroughs and Kathy Acker (now some of you may be Mekons fans laughing at me about the Kathy Acker bit, but in a hundred years you should read *Kathy Goes to Haiti*). I want M.E.S. to survive, which it now looks may happen. The English language in the hands of the Fall, a band named for a translation of a French title. To be together in Iceland.

But here's his personality: a man the same age as me, who's stayed in my life for fifteen years or so because of his work, because the part of his personality I saw for a week has been reflected over and over. These are unbalanced lives, and it seems - impossible. Is it horrible even to have written this? I subscribe to FallNet for news, to see if Mark's okay. Am I being granted a temporary dispensation; opium poppies to trifling celebrity; goldfish life; is this paper being temporarily handed over on account of the same personality disorder? Are there better writers who should be writing this who don't have bands?

Considering the foregoing, the erstwhile celebrity crush is awfully nice when run into at parties; I can only imagine she understands the intricacies of all this and hope she accepts my apologies; I hope Elizabeth's own true words are continually rattled off clattering machines unsmashed by the Luddites and trust that many more people will read them than read this essay for reasons too immaculate to be described, defiled in their description; I hope Mark does read this essay and isn't angry, but I imagine he would be angry and he ought to be except that I want to wake into a world that has in it:

The tables covered in beer
Showbizwhines, minute detail
It's a hand on the shoulder in Leicester Square It's vaudeville pub backroom dusty pictures of White-frocked girls and music teachers
The beds too clean
The waters poison for the system
Then you know in your brain: Leave the Capitol! Pan resides in welsh green masquerades on welsh cat caravans but the monty hides in curtains, grey blackish cream all the paintings you recall
*all the sidestepped cars, all the brutish laughs from the flat and the wild dog downstares.**

Cut to tonight: watching a friend I dearly love self-destruct into something grand on stage, in front of a large crowd. Here, from the periphery, where I choose to live, I can see that the towering majesty of the conversion of aspects of her life into performance that leaves you as a man hit by an airplane will grab her and shake her into the air itself; in 10 years this would seem like name dropping if it had a name in it and maybe even in the time it takes this issue to come out it'd seem like name dropping: Samuel Beckett set to opera, magnificent tears and a music box left alone in the wake of a hydrogen bomb, but that's far too clichéd to describe the actual events of this thing I've witnessed.

At the end of one song, she addresses the situation directly, to us: formerly a camp music-hall play on words now transformed by the lady of Chaillot who politely, arrhythmically applauds her company and begins to shriek "go on go away get the fuck out of here you soul sucking tools of consumerism everyone go home leave" screamed from the catwalk over a scented Roman bath where animals are being slaughtered. It's a razor through the gut, a depth of performance I've only rarely been privileged to view. And I know what it will mean. Am I a beast of prey for loving it so?

The problem we all share is: how to work without destroying, and how to keep our own work from turning upon us.

---

* "Leave the Capitol"

You have brought disgrace on me in making me so famous, for the light you shed reveals my faults more clearly, making them stand out. –Juana Ines de la Cruz (1651-1695)

"God knows I do the best I can so fuck everything."
Anton A. Newcombe (1967-1999)

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Life O Hateful Life

[photo by dieter wuschanski]

Chokebore Tour

By Darby Romeo

(for the true fans, slip on the blue vinyl *Anything Near Water* LP & begin…)

This isn't a typical band article per se, where you have to be a fan of the band in order to read it. At least I hope not (this fucker's 18 pages, get yourself comfortable). It's more travel diary. Every so often you gotta get up and leave. Two years into my Chokebore spell, upon learning of yet another European tour they were to embark upon – and after I'd already begun a lengthy but not so in-depth piece about them – I joined both desires and hinted to Troy about the possibility of accompanying them to Europe. I wasn't expecting his immediate and casual "Sure." I don't think he ever thought I'd really come – though neither did I until I bought the ticket. They were gone already; tentative plan was I'd meet them in France one month later. All I could do was hope they were going let me join them, be t-shirt girl, because I was already on my way.

CAST OF CHARACTERS:

Troy Miller (aka Troy Bruno Von Balthazar) – singer, guitarist
Miik Featherstone (pronounced Mike) – drums
Jonathan Kroll (Jon; often called Joner) – guitar
James Kroll (aka A. Frank G., The Krog) – bass

SUPPORTING CAST:

Olivier – runs their French booking company, Private Joke, and acts as a sort of European manager.
Jean-Louise (aka Jean-Oui) – 1st driver, sound man
Helen & Severine – groupies
Pascal – Jon's French girlfriend
Jean-Paul – 2nd driver, sound man
Vero – Troy's French girlfriend
The Basketball Girls – the ultimate Chokebore fans
Christian Madrigal (aka Christian Omar Madrigal Izzo) – drums

The Business

I'll get the boring business out of the way first. Okay, so remember when Helmet was some kind of indie phenomenon? Minneapolis-based Amphetamine Reptile – home of some of my favorite early '90s bands including The Cows, Surgery, GodBullies, Lubricated Goat, Tar – cashed in big time when Helmet sold a lot and Page Hamilton was the new loud frat boy guitar rock god / teen idol. So AmRep sold them off to the majors, bought a building, built a recording studio in the basement, and the male-driven hardcore-weird record label was off and running. Besides Touch & Go and a few others to come, they had some of the best post-punk for the domestic indie set. Around this time (1993) Chokebore – who were then known as Dana Lynn – sent label king-pin Hazelmeyer a tape, and he came out to Los Angeles to see them live. As is apt to happen, James had just sprained his wrist, Jon was throwing up sick…. Tom saw them at Jabberjaw with the Mr. T Experience. Impressed, he signed them for a precedented $0…and gave them about $1100 to record.

"[Am Rep] are really good people," Troy explains. "They're totally straight-up, if you understand the rules, but you never really understand until you've gone through it. You end up learning everything for yourself. While other [bands] fly right past you – you're still learning." The contract was for four albums, though Troy says he never felt stuck. "I was always happy up until the last album when I realized they didn't want to work [on Chokebore] as hard as we wanted to work." He explains and reiterates a gazillion different ways that it's not meant in a derogatory way. "See, the thing about that is, we want to make music our life, so we don't have to have jobs as television repair men – god bless them. Thing is that the longer you go on, the more you learn, and I learned you have to be industrious these days, even though that conflicts with the basic idea of writing music. If you sit there and write music all day it's heaven, and if you only get to sit there for half the day it's only partial heaven, but I suppose that we need to keep buying food from time to time, those sons-of-bitches. You have to spend some of the time thinking about the business side also." They needed a little more from a label so they could spend more time focusing on the music (many a band's m.o.). And AmRep, like almost all indie labels, are basically set up as a forum for releasing music while offering only minimal promotion – until the band pulls in extra dough so they can use it to do bigger promotion, or the band can use any success to springboard to another bigger label which has the resources to move the band

If fame is to come only after death, I am in no hurry for it. –Marcus Valerius Martial (A.D. 40-102) to another level. So really it's almost left up to the band. Which isn't a bad deal. AmRep did have a good reputation at the time. Being on their label was a plus for any young group. And indie labels at least allow for complete artistic control.

But if you call up AmRep today, they might say: Chokebore who? Supposedly Hazelmeyer was much less impressed with their second release and then increasingly so with their following two. A four-record deal that Tom could have broken, yet he continued to offer to put out their music, but with Chokebore exploring more than the boy-rock-hard sounds, Hazelmeyer and AmRep's support waned. Publicity was practically nil. (The AmRep affiliate in Europe – now called Boomba and run by different people – does organize some publicity on their tours, which are fairly well received and covered in European press).

"What we want to find is a label that's very interested in our music and really wants to work with us, so that we can concentrate 100%. I just want to make music, and if they listen to it in Zimbabwe, that's great, we'll play there. We almost gave up on America. I'm sure there's some people out there that want to hear something that's not on MTV. Isn't everyone just sick of bad-quality crap we're given every fucking minute? That's why we stay in Europe so much. It all comes down to this, would we rather play Tuesday night in Fresno in front of a bunch of angry white boys, or Tuesday night in Paris, in front of people who are really listening. I'd rather be in Europe. I'd rather have a bad show in Spain than a great show in Fresno any day, because after it all you're in fucking Spain."

Late '98 AmRep announced they would be closing down the offices for 10 months. When you're a band, especially one who wants to tour or has a new album just completed, it's a long long time. They'd just sold Nashville Pussy to a major for something like $1,000,000 – good excuse for a vacation. At this point the band hasn't spoken to their label in a year*.

Is guitar-rock dead? If it is, why are so many "post-punk" and "post-grunge" bands still topping the charts? In the midst of this, you'd think Chokebore – a band that by default fits into the category – would have more success Stateside, where even Hole can sell 1,000,000 albums. But really, since their initiative success when just signed to AmRep, their luck in America hasn't yet panned out. Kurt Cobain liked them enough to have them open for Nirvana on their last tour – two months later he killed himself. And since then Chokebore has pretty much focused all their energy on Europe, and Europe has responded. To their credit, despite guitar-rock's demise – which has more adversely affected the European rock club scene – they have managed to careen on through. For example, their latest was rated one of the top five albums of the year in *Visions* (a popular European music magazine). And stranger than fiction, singles from their new LP were rated number 16 in German club charts, under the "alterna-dance" category (whatever that includes).

October – LA

THE FOLD CLUB

"The next song is "Thin As Clouds". It's about…being skinny…and looking upwards… Looking for food."
–Troy Bruno Balthazar

[above photos: James by Darby, Jon by Darby, Miik by Lars Gotzenberger]

So wait, let us backtrack a little. We're still Stateside, me chatting silly dreamlike with my Argentinean friends / Chokebore fans post show (for some reason my foreign friends are crazy about this band. The see every show with me; they learn extra English in order to sing the words; they ask for updates when otherwise I don't ever hear them listen to modern American music):

"I love them because I love them. It's simple. It's from my book of love."

"Come on, why…?" she whines. "But why do you like them, I want something more specific."

"I like them because they are among the few things that can penetrate me, penetrate the barriers I put up and mental thoughts. And they skip all my filtration systems and go deep inside. And fill me up…"

"With light," my other Argentinean friend states simply.

"Yeah, exactly," I confirm, "with light."

Really, I can't explain it myself. They are, when you get down to it, in simplest terms, just a guitar rock band…and a tree is just a tree.

After the show we go back to their house and my Argentinean friends and I stay up all night singing and dancing at our all-girl Chokebore slumber party.

Wed., September 4 – Paris

Miik saved the lives of Troy and Jon. They were scheduled – with seats reserved – on the Swiss Air Flight 101 that went down. Miik's sorta bummed it doesn't really count, because even though he saved their lives, it's not because he wanted to, but because he is cheap. He simply found them a better deal through another travel agent, and for that Troy grants him no great reward. That coupled with the fact that their first show, in Geneva, Switzerland, was cancelled. "That's ultimately why we didn't go. If the show hadn't been canceled we probably would have stayed on that flight. I was pretty bummed when it got cancelled." Troy didn't realize it was his plane that had crashed until arriving in Europe – no one told him, perhaps because it might have freaked him out too much. Our last talk before he left, confirming the idea that maybe I'd see him there, was peppered with paranoid plane-crash remarks from him anyway.

Mon./Tues., Sept. 21-22 – LA to Paris

Plane flight is ten hours but it seems five, tops. The airline lady gave me a tip of the day that the family taking up a block of seats a row behind mine might not show up so I sit there and wait while everyone boards. Only one annoying man, who gives me a creepy feeling he's looking at me too much, sits on the right edge of the row but otherwise it's all mine. The stewardesses come through the curtains as actresses making their entrance to the stage. I have an urge to applaud. They are beautiful and well-timed. Earlier they did pantomime to the "emergency situation" film and it was synchronized ballet. They're perfect.

...A chunk of the funds to get into the city. Hours of walking, circles. Procuring directions from the few who acquiesce to converse in English. No sleep adding up; muscles knotting in the back and burning. The weight on my shoulders transformed from things of worry to things of literal weight. I'm closing in on the last strand, dangling live wire. Laughing and crying become similar. Hysteria, manic, falling, failing, forgetting, in the Cyberport, where it costs $4 to use the non-Qwerty computer for 30 minutes. Later, always later, I will learn that once America wakes up the lines run slow, calling before 2pm is best – right now it's four. Waste of time. Try the phone again, still looking for a place to stay. Parléz vous Anglaise? S'il vous plait!? Por moi!!! Poor me! Now the poste is closed for certain and there's just too many things in my bag. What was I thinking? Was all last minute "Oh, I need this'es" and "Oh, I won't be 'backpacking' per se, so this is no problem" and "There are lockers in Les Halles." No, for the record, there are not. There are no lockers in Paris. They have

* At press time Troy finally talked with Hazelmeyer and he kindly let them out of their contract, and *Black Black* will be released Stateside by Punk in My Vitamins Records, run by Vern, the bassist from Unwound.

been replaced by thousands of gorgeous boys. This is not the way I wanted the trip to begin.

Wed., Sept. 23 – Paris

Chokebore's show at LaCigale is cancelled. The band Stereophonics doesn't want them to open because they don't want to be outstaged. They want a bad opener. It's no rumor either, or reactionary remark on the part of the dissed Chokebore. Olivier, owner of Private Joke, a European tour organizer who is the promoter for this event, was actually told this by the Stereophonics. Honest enough – take it as a compliment I guess. Luckily I finally reached them before I dragged my sorry ass across Paris late-night trying to find the place.

They're staying in a three-star hotel near the Moulin Rouge. I don't think I've ever stayed in a three-star hotel, anywhere, anytime, but especially in Europe. In Paris I've only experienced squats or hostels and stinky old mattresses which you have to flip over hoping the springs don't poke out the other side too, with bathrooms down the hall, and the luxury of private showers – a perk! I've always ended up in something seedy, carrying the character of it's city's burdened musty history.

We drink in Miik's room. He just got back from a one-day trip to Texas to attend his sister's wedding. He's going through his clothes – merely half of a duffel bag filled – seems he's lost most of them somewhere in Belgium. Earlier Jon complains that Miik is now in a room next to his, ruining the impression of having the floor to himself. Now he doesn't seem to mind using Miik's room as the meeting ground, for a few drinks. It's Jon, Miik, James, and I – the only girl with three guys at surrounding points. James is the most outright funny. He says things, snide analogies like, "It's like the fat lady/scooter scenario – they're fun until your friends see you riding around on one." We're in his room later that night and I ask him to repeat it – and he can't even remember, only able to spew these witticisms in a moment's midst. He shrugs and lights another cigarette. He likes watching auto-racing, English news, and cartoons. The alarm is set with the front desk for 7:50 (even though it's already four) in order to wake up for *Cow and Chicken* – a Chokebore favorite. We fall asleep to Canal Plus (where XXX European porno is occasionally aired) with lines running through because the hotel doesn't get this channel – which makes it less awkward. "Otherwise it would be weird watching porno in bed together," he says.

I'm still not given the definite okay as for my accompanying them once their tour commences in just two days. Though I lie and tell them otherwise, I have nowhere to go for three weeks if they decide to leave me behind.

Thurs., Sept. 24 – Paris

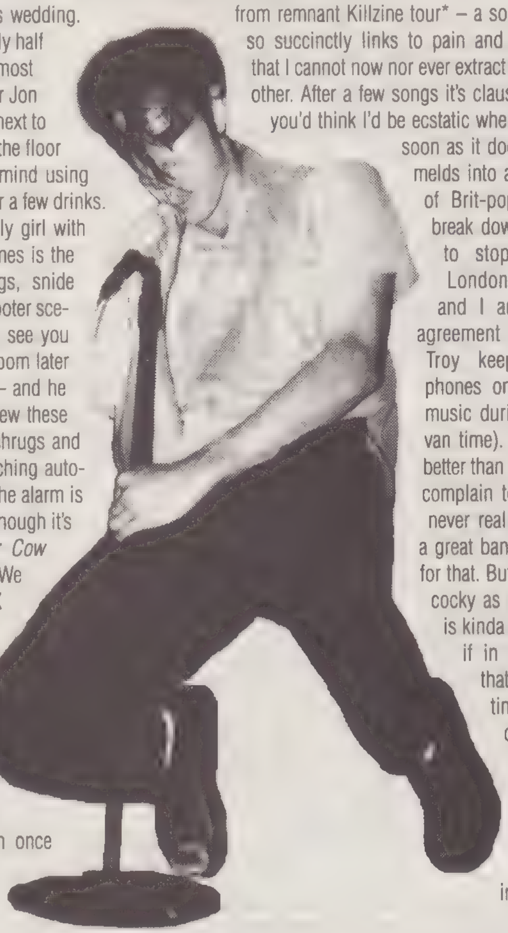
They leave tomorrow morning. Tonight we go meet some local Chokebore friends. Waiting in Montmartre, standing on the street corner. Troy has other business again. Natasha and Mattieu arrive. Nice. Then Alex and her boyfriend Mann (yes, "Man"). She's loud and in-your-face. Too soon in mine. I want to decide not to like her but nothing is permanently set and I end up liking her the most. It's a simple evening. Miik beats Man at Puissance Quatre (Connect Four – a regular detour to on-the-road monotony). Right now he's the reigning champ.

Fri., Sept. 25 – Bordeaux

I finally know I'm going on the tour when I'm sitting in the van and all my belongings are onboard. Actually I'm not *totally* confident of this until we're driving out of the city.

First time I step foot in the van, "You sure you want to sit there?" Troy asks, wicked smirking glare – Cheshire cat. What is that about!? I learn if he says something to the effect, and then the stare, he's asking for you to kindly reconsider as you are invading in some way or another. Or he may do something similar if he's asking a favor: be schemingly sweet, but at no point really trying to hide the obvious. And so the trip begins, and so for the rest of it I sit one row up next to Jon.

And the first musical selection – Stereolab. As usual I think it's nice, initially. But that sound, burned in my brain from remnant Killzine tour* – a sound that for me so succinctly links to pain and unpleasantries, that I cannot now nor ever extract from them each other. After a few songs it's claustrophobic. And you'd think I'd be ecstatic when it ends but as soon as it does the selection melds into a heavy rotation of Brit-pop. I eventually break down and beg Jon to stop playing The London Suede; Troy and I are moaning in agreement (even though Troy keeps his headphones on with his own music during most of the van time). Anything being better than Stereolab I can't complain too much. I will never realize Stereolab is a great band – it's too late for that. But I do realize, as cocky as they are, Suede is kinda like Chokebore, if in only the sense that it takes a long time for the drug of their sound to infiltrate. And about half-way through the tour I happily give in to it….



> **I am so full of anger I don't even need to eat. I've got so much fucking juice left man eating speed warm, thick and sweet. And I wish I was a rich man, I'd steal that little girl's steep soul. And I wish I wasn't so fucked and had a little more control. You look at me like I don't mean it. You look at me like I don't care. You look at me like I've got horns and a tail. You look at me like I'm nowhere. I am so full of anger I don't even need to eat. I've got so much fucking juice man eating speed, warm thick and sweet. I've got so much fucking flow. I've got so much fucking grace….**
>
> **– "Wel Fed", *Anything Near Water***

> *"Don't take your life cos your bicycle won't fly, you could be going to heaven tonight. And I wouldn't give a shit if your bicycle's in bits, I think I'm going to heaven on it…"*
>
> *– The London Suede, "To the Birds,"* Sci-fi Lullabies

Five days on animalistic fear, ready to fight or fly. Because being a poor foreigner alone in Paris is…like being a poor foreigner alone in New York City. But now safe in the van, and just as scared. Either that I will be kicked off, or…I'm not sure. Guess I'm always worried. This trip is about Kava Kava and one glass of wine a day and *reeelaaax*. Okay, I'll breathe. At least I'm out of the stress of Paris.

> *The leaves have fallen, the vine is going to sleep. All that remains to be done is to cover its feet for the winter. Before it reawakens, the vinegrower will be getting it into condition for a new year. The vinegrower will make the most of this hibernation of the plants to remove the useless shoots from the vine. The vine has to be pruned because it is a carefree and extremely lively climbing plant, prone to sprout off in over-long shoots, making more wood than grapes. The whole complex art of the vinegrower involves channeling this vigor into producing fruit. Legend has it that Saint Martin noticed that the vines whose branches had been lopped by grazing goats bore more bunches of better-looking grapes. Certainly Saint Martin and his goats could have invented pruning, but we may suppose that these engaging quadrupeds did their cutting in rather haphazard fashion, and worse than that, in the middle of the growing season, which is against all the rules.*
>
> *–from Bordeaux, A Legendary Wine, by Michel Dovaz*

Winter is approaching quick – much quicker than in LA – we should be pruning and readying for the season's slumber and rehabilitation, but we've just begun — or I've just begun. It's only with a final burst of vibrant summer energy, mutating into a ponderous cool-down. We head south and it gets cooler by degrees — impossible to beat the encroaching climate. The countryside to Bordeaux streaming by with flashes of truck and car heading 100 miles an hour in a large white Mercedes Sprinter with built-in "movie theatre," comfy seats with leg room and skylights and all the trimmings: lighting, heating, air, even a bed for "the princess" (what Troy is sometimes called behind his back, I think because he likes to sleep a lot, and, well, he *is* the singer). Equipment stored in a separate area in the back so as to not be in the way or visible. And when we stop to pick up some guy off the side of the road it's like a drug connection, only he's the soundman boarding with a gym bag loaded with American flicks. And finally I can shit because when I travel or there's some big event I get all choked up and now we won't stop for an hour and a half and I'm ready, with cramps and loud noises from the gut which luckily can't be heard over the van's engine.

Maybe certain people *shouldn't* relax.

It's a big club we're heading to and the boys fret they won't be able to fill the place. Rocket from the Crypt has canceled and Chokebore are now headlining. This is my first night so I'm fearless and confident they have nothing to worry about. First things first: We get to the club, like a youth cultural center – nice, new, large. When I see the area I'm supposed to sell the shirts, I hear the voice of James's then-fiancée Arlene – previous t-shirt girl – ringing in my ears: "Yeah, and sometimes you're in the same

---

* One month traveling the U.S. in a Winnebago with other zinemakers. See zine *Socially Fucking Retarded* for that tour diary.

Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise / (That last infirmity of noble mind). –John Milton (1608-1674)

TROY BRUNO BALTHAZAR

"There's no integrity in LA. I don't appreciate all this. I'm not ignorant – I don't want to be treated this way. I want quality, in photography, movies, trinkets, the countryside."

FOOTBALL

Somewhere inside I think I'm right all the time. I translate that into my music and writing. I'm happy I found that thing that gets me there. I know where I got it: football. I was on a #1 team. I worked so fucking hard. Like pro athletes. And we were 12 years old. People crying. We worked our asses off. The coach made us win. One bad team later, practice was loose and we sucked.

I had a football scholarship to an all-boys' school, a good Hawaiian school. I was tired after a game, and I saw a punker skateboarding by with two cute punk girls chasing after him. I threw down my helmet and took up skateboarding the next day. I've been boarding ever since. Skateboarding is totally progressive. It's about kids pushing the envelope. It keeps you loose. It's good to fall down, roll on the cement. It helps me out, keeps me limber.

By my senior year I wanted a guitar. By the end of the month I needed a guitar. More than anything. My mom bought me one for my birthday. I locked myself in my room. Those were the best days in my life. Writing songs.

I've made music into something I do every single night. It has to do with drive. When I become this old man I want to look back and be proud of what I did. I want to know I put everything into it – didn't sacrifice integrity.

TROY'S FACIAL CONTORTIONS

I'm just getting loose.

Yeah, that's what I meant when I compared it to yoga. It's like all your muscles are getting stretched out and warped.

I probably shouldn't hear this.

It's fun to watch. But I look at you a little, and then I have to look at Jon's guitar.

I figure that's probably what happens, but…it doesn't matter. As long as when I'm playing it's real, I feel good, and nothing else matters.

What do you feel like when you're playing on stage?

Usually I just listen to the music. I want to lay back into the music. That's what I do. I'm not really doing this for the party, or for the people. I'm really doing this because I really like the music. Everything else is not as important. Sometimes I pretend that other things are slightly important, but really I'm kinda pretending, or half pretending. Nothing else Which is good and bad. I'm a very serious guy. It sucks to be around. But not for me. You've got to be what you are.

THE MUSIC

Over time the music still has an effect on you?

Oh yeah, more and more. I know now, if I can have a day in the studio, I can make a great great great song.

How many songs do you write in a week, or month?

Depends on the month, or the hour. It's harder to write on tour. When I'm at home, when I have time alone, I can write all day. But it's hard to find time alone. If I could be home alone for a month I could write two albums, easily, all parts. About a year ago I had 10 days in a house in France, a stone house. This girl was working, so she left me her house for ten days, big yard, hammock and stuff. That's where I wrote most of *Black Black*. Cool as fuck, kicking back, this little house in France. Acoustic guitars, tape recording it.

But I'm learning now how to be alone and around people…actually I almost broke up with that girl because I wouldn't talk for a while. I just started to talk again. Because a lot of times I don't want to

THE VAN

Who was telling me the dynamics of the van, that you guys just sit there, don't talk at all?

Yes, I love that. Last European tour I didn't talk to anyone for like a week. Everyone else got depressed about it, everyone went crazy, but I was just hanging out. Every couple of months you need to just sit by yourself, and when you're on a six-month tour with six other people sitting next to you, for 10 hours driving and then being in a packed club, and going to sleep with your bandmate next to you in the hotel room and waking up with the guy, you just have zero time…. I had to do it in my head. Some people don't need that. James loves to be around people. We're *very* different people in the band. It comes down to this: We described our heaven. James described his heaven as being in the penthouse in a hi-rise in New York City, in Paris or something. Speeding around in a little car. Partying, you know. Just going. And mine is being on an island alone. A little island all by myself, sitting there, looking at the water.

And what's Jon's?

I think his – he likes to travel.

What about Milk? How long has he been in the band?

Two years. He's the new guy.

He's still a new guy after two years?

Yeah, we tease him about it. He's a really cool guy. The guy's just like, he can be in any situation and feel good, and people are going to say this is a nice guy. And he's good at a lot of different things. Yeah, he can stop the band and go and do something completely different and be really good at it, easily.

THE PRESS

You know what, I get to go off to Germany and when I get there I have to do lots of interviews, and I don't *want* to do any interviews. You know why? I say the same thing they asked the last time. It's like, "I love to do music, I love it more than everything else." And that's all. You know what I want to do? I want to play acoustic shows. And I want someone to come up to me and say, Hey, make a soundtrack for a movie. Here's enough money to go into the studio.

By yourself or with the band?

By myself or with the band. I think we'd all be pretty into it. I'm really interested in doing things away from…you know, whenever I write the damn songs I write them on acoustic guitar, and they're translated to Chokebore songs. Sometimes it freaks me out, sometimes it's great. It's good working with these guys 'cause they're really smart people, and they know what they're doing and have good ideas. But everyone wants their own pure vision also, you know. So I'm going to do acoustic stuff too. I'm really excited about that.

So you get more press in Europe?

Yeah, way more. Way way way more

How does that happen?

Well, it happens because we went over there once with the Clusterfuck tour: Today Is The Day and Guzzard – six weeks U.S. '93, five weeks Europe '94. They're two other bands from AmRep. And Chokebore just said, "Damn, this is killer out here." And I'd always wanted to go to Europe…

This was your first time?

Yeah. So I just kept calling the guy in Europe telling him how great I thought it was, and how interested in coming back we were. And basically that's it. And the guy brought us back, 'cause we work hard – we'll play sixty shows straight, small clubs in front of no one, just to be doing it. Of course next time you come back there are people there. So we just did that, and each year we've had a great fucking time. Even now, if everything stopped right now, when I'm 50 I'll look back on this period and go, man, that was fucking cool.

EUROPE

So you think you're going to end up living in Europe?

Yeah

Where?

I don't know. I want to check out Greece again. I'd like to live on an island, and they have islands out there. Gorgeous. The only thing is, I couldn't speak that language, not at all. To read it or speak it is so difficult.

What about the rest of the band – their thoughts for the future?

It all depends on everything. I think they would be pretty much into…who knows what will happen. But I know what I would like to happen. I think they would like to end up somewhere interesting.

You could always sell the house.

I could sell the house. But I always told myself, when I sell that fucking house, I'm going to Tahiti. When I sell that house, that's when I'm gone. The day that I say, "You know what, this isn't fun anymore." Or the day I say, "This isn't real anymore." If for some reason I get tricked, for money or something, and I don't appreciate what I'm doing – I'm gone. I'm living in fucking…I don't know where I'll go. I was thinking about Thailand, the south of Thailand. There's miles of beaches you can live on for $2 a day like a king.

Sounds like a good Chokebore kind of budget.

Yeah, I'd be cool, but right now I'm doing this; I have a lot of energy.

You have a lot of fucking juice left?

Amen to that, sister. I'm gonna use that. Um, yeah, I got a lot of that crap. I really do. So I gotta use that up a while first before I start sitting on a beach, you know. But I always know everything's all right because I can just go sit on that beach. I can sell my house tomorrow, go down there, buy a fucking long board, go surfing. That's a good thing too. No matter how crazy this life is, you can always just go surfing.

THE SURF

So you surf in France while you're there?

Yeah, I surfed in Corsica, a little island in the Mediterranean, real fun. They don't have any sharks, that's cool. And the water…

They don't have any sharks?

Nope.

Anything monstrous?

Nothing. Nothing that hurts you in the water there.

Really?

Yeah, Mediterranean. I was out there, snorkeling and stuff. I just swam 15 minutes straight out, all by myself. Looking down it's probably about 60 feet deep. I was just tripping out, with just a mask and a snorkel – holy fuck, it was so deep you could have fit whales there. And I was seeing huge fat fish moving real slow at the bottom.

So clear you could see.

Crystal clear, like a dream. So scary my heart was beating so fast, 'cause I'm used to knowing there are sharks around. When you're out there thinking nothing can hurt you…

So you were scared when nothing could hurt you?

'Cause I grew up in Hawaii, there are sharks everywhere. Just not used to not looking around all the time.

Do people die out there in Hawaii a lot?

Well, not a lot, but sometimes.

I've never seen a shark, besides a baby.

I saw one, in Hawaii

Just the fin, or the teeth?

I saw the fin. That's all you need to see. Just started paddling straight in. Me and my friend Rob were at this one place that's like a big hammerhead feeding ground, this lagoon thing, so you know there are like thousands of sharks there. But we went surfing, there's a spot right on the edge, and my friend says, "Hey, check it out," and there's a fucking fin right there. I turn around and look and turn back, and my friend catches the last wave in and it's flat, no waves.

HAWAII

I was born in Chicago. My mother used to move a lot. She used to move every six months 'til I was eight, almost We went to Israel and across the USA over and over and over. She liked Hawaii and stayed. My mom moved us there because my father was in Hawaii.

Where was he when you were traveling?

I don't know. I haven't talked to him in like 20 years. We lived with him a little bit in my young life, then she moved there. He got us a house and everything, and then left us. So she ended up saying, Well it's cool here, I'll just stay. He was an architect And he owns a judo gym in Florida and was training the Israeli army (at 55 years old) for a while. We lived [in Israel] and had to move out 'cause when you're 13 you have to go into the army. My mom writes, paints…she's writing a book and film script.

Are you Jewish?

My father's mother is from Yemen. Super dark-skinned gypsy My family's been atheist for generations, but by blood probably, yeah.

What's the thing about Hawaii that's carried over into Chokebore music, if anything?

Sure, it's all our childhood memories. So that always comes out in our music. Almost every song, you always think about that. If you're in one spot. I had lots of time alone there because I didn't have friends for a long long time, you know. It was cool, I liked it. But my mother actually took me to a psychologist. I remember that, but all they did was buy me Slurpies and walk with me down by the river. They'd buy me a Slurpie and say, "Is there anything wrong?" And I'd say, "No, nothing's wrong, you know. I feel fine I just don't like any of those kids." A bunch of shmucks. Then I got a Big Brother. He bought me so much food. Every weekend he would take me out and buy me food. Take me hiking, camping…

You still talk to your Big Brother?

No. (pause) I don't know if you want to put that in there. It's real embarrassing.

I always wanted to know who got the Big Brothers.

I got 'em. But you know, you think about it, that guy was cool. Because what he did was (mid-20s) he had two jobs but still every weekend he decided he wanted to take out this kid, buy him food, and hang out with this kid 'cause this kid needed someone to hang out with – and he'd just give up his time for someone he didn't even know…I'd never do it. Hell, you think I'm crazy.

A funny thing Jon said: I asked what questions he hated to be asked during interviews, and he said Hawaii.

When we talk about anything we talk about Hawaii just to fuck with Miik, 'cause Miik's not from there, and that's fun.

It also comes down to surfing and skateboarding.

Well see, surfing and skateboarding…I was surfing when I was 12 years old, and it was of the best times in my entire life. Still, I don't want to talk about it in a damn interview, you know. Our music has nothing to do with surfing. See, Jon and James didn't really have a good time in Hawaii. But I had a pretty good time. That's one of the reasons they don't want to talk about it very much. They're not really the outdoorsy types. They like to be indoors, in cold weather, in the city.

And you have a sister.

Raya

Jon brought her up, that that's how you all met.

Actually, you know what, the first time I met Jon I saw him playing at these punk rock shows and I thought, Wow, that guy's a fucking great guitarist, 'cause his hand moved really fast. And I was just starting to learn how to play guitar – I didn't even understand the concept. And I went up to him one night, we were at some show…they had some great shows back then…and I remember I asked Jon, "How do you write a song, man?" I thought he was this guitar god or something. And he was such a dick, he said, "You just take these chords and put them together" And all the people around were like, fuck, he totally iced you. "You just put them together man, what do you mean?" Wow, that guy's a fucking dick. I remember thinking that. To treat someone like that, who was asking him a question.

So what band was he in then?

That was Mug.

So that was a band only he and James were in?

Well, we were all in Mug at one time or another Mug was a really huge – it's still going, I think – punk rock band in Hawaii.

And just has rotating members?

Pretty much, except the two guys that usually stay there. Mug shows were great, packed with people. And sometimes these huge Samoan guys would come and attack, and there'd be huge fights, the punk rockers vs. the local people. One time 50 Samoans piled out of a truck and just started whaling on people. It was crazy. But I never had any troubles in Hawaii. I never got beat up. But James used to get beat up every day. First day of school he got beat up and got a trash can thrown over his head in front of the entire school.

Why?

Because he was a tall white geek, you know. Poor guy, you know, it sucks. And he was loud, loud and obnoxious. I guess I'm a little quieter. I was friends with everybody. I had big Samoan friends

You didn't go to the same school, though?

Actually we did, but at different times. They went to Kaiser, I was at Kalani. That was great 'cause it was really fun, nice people. But the last year I was thinking, I want to go to something more…Kaiser seemed like something out of the movies. Rich girls and snobs. And then I went there and that's what it was – rich girls and snobs. It wasn't as fun as Kalani. Kinda regret that.

What island was this all on?

Oahu

Now, does LA affect the music?

Sure. LA definitely affects it. Because I hate LA so much that I don't do anything so I get a lot of time to do music. Nah, I don't hate it that much. I used to hate it a lot more, but now I, you know…let's face it, LA sucks compared to most places in the world. Sorry if I'm offending you. But there are some good things too. It's harder to meet people and…fuck 'em. I lived here for years and it's still just a fucking stupid-ass town. But, what the hell. There's good weather, and you can drive an hour and be somewhere cool. And, um, well, let's face it, it's just because my grandma croaked and so I got her house here.

Otherwise you would be...?

Gone. Very gone.

[(L) The consummate Troy photo by Lars Gotzenberger. (R) Troy on piano at home by Darby.]

We're in a good place as a band – nothing to lose. We can do exactly what we want to do The only thing we're missing is money for food. I'm a skinny guy. If I had some money not to be this skinny…

room with the band." Sometimes?! She was saying that like it was a good thing you didn't always have to be. She'd seen them enough, I suppose. But as my part of the bargain, I *wanted* to see Chokebore. I will sell t-shirts *only* as long as I can see them every night – the unwritten deal I'd made with Troy. Now night one I'm not even in a position to *hear* the music.

Olivier sets up the t-shirt area. He has this quite organized – taking anything having anything to do with money very seriously. We count shirts for the inventory he'll be leaving me in charge of, makes me wear the cursed t-shirt girl fanny pack to keep the cash. The idea this will be work is setting in – I wish he was a little more punk rock about the whole thing. They sound check. I feel lucky to be there.

Again I share a room with James. The hotel imitates a small second-class cabin aboard an old cruise ship. Ropes and ship portals and portraits with the cliché petite European bathrooms that leave Americans forever perplexed over the reason for irritating hand-held shower devices and absent shower curtains. I want an iron for my wrinkled skirt (this is before the point I give up on trying to look fancy) and James wants a porn video (he'll never give up on those), both of which you can check out at the front desk. We go down together as married couple, all honey and dear, so he (and I) wouldn't be embarrassed.

THE THEATRE BARBEY

"One day a man came down to earth and said hello. He came down to earth and said 'hey'. And I don't know who this man is but fuck it."

Troy madly beams from the stage. The club air is thick like it used to be in LA pre-smoking ban. And it's packed. 600+ people come to see Chokebore tonight; in their hometown they can barely get 100 – then again I don't think they ever really try. "It's a weird night. The world spinning all crazy," he says. "Don't know who is spinning it though. It's alright." Some singers bore between songs, some don't utter a word. Troy mumbles abstractly, counterpart to uncomprehended lyrics, summoning something ethereal, something pulled from thin air, out of the head, spinning the days dilemmas, silly fairy tales, nonsensical dubious substance. All punctuated with psychotic laughter. Awkward. "Here's a story that'll make you shit your panties." "I'm not wearing any," James's immediate reply. Most of the audience knows the stories, they sing the words. The complementing music bends and snaps back into place, with a gyro effect that sends their audience, the fans, into the spin. The world *is* spinning. Right now *they're* spinning it.

But my observations are limited to running back and forth between stage and t-shirt table – inevitably giving up to the latter. It's mostly crowded anyway and Olivier is worried I'm not paying it enough mind, so I resign myself to playing salesgirl – and to the delicious Bordeaux stashed under the table. Bottles of this wine, complimentary at the next few shows, *becomes* my essential pruning tool: sloppy as a goat's munching at the excess vine, it munches at my excess stress, my vigor channeled by its soothing juice, from which better fruit will be inspired to blossom, for Christ's sakes.

As James' girlfriend also warned pre-tour, you get questioned, and courted, and you inevitably meet a lot of nice people. Tonight it's attack of the groupies. They're all out. They want to know how to become t-shirt girl. Even buy my special Europe-only zine *(You're Up!)* I've made to sell for spending money, just because I'm somehow associated. Some guy offers to transcribe the French version for a complimentary copy. I sell a bunch and am pleased as punch; Chokeboré sells like $500 worth of merchandise. They get paid equivalent to $1000 U.S. or so for most of their shows, which is a healthy sum, but figuring all their traveling expenses, the merch sales really help cover a lot of it, including their per diems. So far so good.

After the show they walk through the front room miniature rock stars, fans of varying denominations crowd about waiting their turn to ask their latest question, to make some connection. The most ardent groupies, I discover, are, by this point, after Chokebore's continuous and intensive tour coverage of the area, more or less friends – a seemingly open door to the members where even the weirdest characters aren't cold-shouldered.

One of the strange owns a "speakeasy" in the city. She invites us all to come and we walk the crooked streets. A college town amidst old churches and many "under construction" zones. At night it's lit dimly, nicely creepy and has character that hints at the macabre beauty of a fog-coated Prague, but this with all the quaint charms of the French that are mostly lost in the big French city. Winding this way and that, the woman can barely find her own bar in the maze. It's cool not cold, and raining without the annoyance of getting much wet. Who would have minded strolling in it all night? And I think some of them did just that, but after an hour or so I'm beat and those unhitched go back to the hotel for the good night's sleep.

The hotel's stairwell is reeking from the drunken remains of one who didn't make it to the bathroom in time, and it never does get cleaned so the stairs must be avoided. Otherwise the night in the hotel is pleasant and we arise to an adequate buffet, then all but Troy leave for the club at the predetermined time to load the van. And we wait…and wait. I read a few chapters of *Electric Kool-aid Acid Test* (I hadn't read it before), a walk down the street to get some smokes and patisserie sweets with James, and some Tai Qi in a sorta hidden area by a garden (which wasn't so hidden and I'm still to this day mocked about it). The boys climb the building; Jon runs off to find cucumbers to thicken his blood to make up for last night's drinking (see page 58)… Troy still hasn't shown up after a few hours. Olivier is calling every available girl in the city who went to the show, whose number we had or could get…. It ends up he was asleep, even though the concierge told us he'd checked out, and mad we hadn't all left the hotel together like we usually do. It was true, that is how it went for the rest of the trip, and as a group we usually stuck to the schedule together. Everyone wanted someone to blame – no one beyond reproach – the event's dissenting effects dispersed by the time of the next show. Lucky for them, they always had the next show to expel any accumulating angst.

Sat., Sept. 26 – Tulle

Lying on the bed winding up rainy highways. Eerie silence. Troy doesn't speak to me – maybe we've said two sentences to each other this whole trip. Two-day trip. But that's perfect. And the stone mountains are cut to make tunnels and lush forest so thick I can't see just how thick. And I could roam it all day, and I could walk the whole of Southern France.

Dear Dean* – Sitting duck loser selling t-shirts like a fucking zine convention in Tulle, France which is dripping old beauty. I walked here from the hotel following the creepy creeping river but 'twas not enough. I am completely alone, sitting in a van, at a show, between locations, where I wouldn't mind staying and just walking…alone I would feel less alone. Now just sick drunk trying not to cross over – a fucking t-shirt girl I could be shoveling shit…Merde! I have been courted of course, to stay here and pick apples. And why not?

Only sold 0 of my "You're Up!" special-edition zine tonight. Made 90ff last night, but lost 21ff and people stole three so guess I earned a baguette. And what's the goal? To eat every day? To make small talk successfully? In English? Or foreign languages? I know why people have boyfriends/girlfriends. Chokebore has a girl in every port. I'm alone and what's the difference? I could go sell apples and snowboard the Alps. Hmm, I think the guy who offered this left, but I could anyway. Oh, there he is….

The morning after is always so calm – even though

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* The only person I write to while on tour (though I don't bother sending the letters until its end). These hacked-up letters appear in italics in this font throughout.

Some damn body is always trying to embalm me. I'm always making a comeback, but nobody ever tells me where I've been. –Billie Holiday

I dreamt of being in some sort of reunion with friends, family, in Dresden/Sarajevo, celebrating – each other, no war – and then, a speech/poetry is being spoken, and to the rhythm the bombs, slowly at first, start again to drop.

Finally and only just last night did the singer speak to me. His life is only about the hour he plays music, and everything else is wasting time. Except girls, a beautiful distraction from this wasting of time…but it's not music. And again, what's the point? Always so sad and what's the point?

Sun., Sept. 27 – Toulouse

Dean – We're heading for Toulouse: A day off. The bad thing about that, I'm learning, is we don't get fed. I spent a total of 1ff yesterday (20¢ – actually a little less). In Paris, on my own for three days I spent $120 and had a place to stay and only bought two meals (half the money I have for the whole trip) – brutál! And the punks have been replaced by skaters. Must admit I found myself looking for Ben. When I first arrived back at Chalet, by the fountain, the flooding of then into now. We are leaving, a room that smells like sewer in a cute one-star hotel and I'm just glad I haven't had to sleep in the van yet because not every night is there room for me….

Again I share a room with James. Glad he calls me roomie cause it's a dash of comfort under isolating circumstances. Otherwise being the butt of a joke comes in second. He smokes without pause and I might as well join in because I'm inhaling so much anyway. We stay in what is comparatively first class to most European hotels I've enjoyed. Actually, the boys' tour is first class compared to any tours or road trips I've previously participated. When there is a show at least room and board is taken care of (this being the typical m.o. in Europe even for smaller bands). I don't have to spend a dime as long as I can make it to the club. And I'm drinking like a drinker, and smoking like a smoker. And this is the environment and I blend in, fade into the backdrop. It's still an issue that I can't instigate and take control, like those figures I admire most. And I shut up and can't speak and stutter utterances like bleeps and blips and stomach ties into knots from repression. And I have to size up the situation before I can decide what person I need to be – and if I can't figure it out I become…nothing.

Mon., Sept. 28

"I'm peaking right now!" Troy and James do Fruit (pronounced früt) Tossing pre-show – 'til the fun to war and the fruit to jelly. (It is decided they must add oranges to the rider. Oranges are better than apples for the fruit toss.) At the same time verbal battle ensues, Whose girl is sleeping around, etc. Entered are random disjointed quotes – which seem to perfectly capture some of the more succinct moments of monotony, which the band will hopefully forgive me for instinctively noting:

Mike: Drink with me?
Troy: No. I don't drink with men.
Mike: (cracking up) Did you hear that?
James: He actually said it.
Troy: I only drink with women.
Mike: But you get to know the guys. …If you get too close you leave.
Troy: But see, the thing is, I only think of girls when I drink.

* * * * *

Troy: "I'm a nice guy, the Krog* usually wins."
James: "Yeah, this is the best part of the night, kicker was pretty good."

[photo by David Wolfe Patri

Troy: "I'm just not in the mood to talk to people. I don't want to talk to guys."
James: "If some girlies talked to you?"
Troy: "But it's not, they're all guys."
James: "Up your ass man."
Troy: "Life is such a pathetic waste of time."
James: "I dry hump my life away. Never did a thing. Glorious."
Troy: "I've never missed Vera this much in my life. It's good, it gives me something to think about. I have nothing else to think about. What else is there to do?"
James: "Drugs, tail, and früt."

The location, Bikini, is a Mafioso club off a busy country road, radio station below and industrial-laden river aside. Toulouse is the capital of the French aerospace industry, producing high-tech Airbus jets and the Concorde, and the city is supposed to be economically well-off because of this, but from this view all one can really see is the industry's visual intrusions. Jon's girlfriend Pascal is with us. She's Nivea queen, can't leave home without a jar of the stuff, which she applies religiously to her never-allowed-to-be-dry lips. She and I sit by this brown river, lie out to soak in what's left of the year's sun. She's reading Paul Auster's new book *Hand to Mouth* and doesn't think it's as good as the last but recommends it anyway. As we arrive a boy passes by to do some toxic trout fishing; as we leave he returns with no success. We go do exercises by the unused pool, taking turns leading a move then tapping off to the next to lead, until she tires of my more aerobic urges and wants to rest. She smokes a lot. European.

So the show is weird. Jon's in the middle and doesn't work there, and Troy is far to the side from where we're standing, and the sound comes disjointed. His voice is fucked up even though I'd like to blame it on equipment and our location – whatever – it's just wrong, as if the CD version was clean and now you're hearing them without all those million-dollar special studio effects (as if). Pascal dances twitchy, helps graciously back and forth at the table (which seems to confuse my accounting and inventory), inquires as to what's wrong with Troy's voice, applies extra Nivea. When we're all loaded up, she's saying her farewells, bids me adieu – kiss, kiss – and hands me her Nivea container. Modest acts transform to grand gestures. I wish she were coming with us.

Mon., Sept. 28 – Toulouse to Strasbourg

James is always front seat co-pilot – the front being the only place smoking is allowed – eternally reaching back for more beer. He'll finish off at least a six-pack's worth just on the drive to the next club – more for longer rides if there's any left over. He NEVER has money so stocking the van is usually on his mind.

All night from Toulouse to Strasbourg, 10 hours. James stays up to keep Jean-Louise (pronounced by the band Jean-Oui) awake and I squeeze into the empty wet seat up front and center and join in. Smoke packs full and dance crazy trip-hop. Driving to the thump thump "come with me, and take my hand" drum and b-b-bass. The road, and Europe in general, is conducive and careens through the tripping electronic pulses. Lots of Tricky. Twist is I'd sold all my Tricky CDs, among *many* others, in order to pay for this Europe flight (kisses to the boys at Rhino). And now it takes Europe to get me to a place where I can finally sit back and listen to him. James keeps replay on so I can dance all night to their cover of Public Enemy's "Blacksteel." Dancing techno fiend – might as well be on acid. In the sleep-deprived R.E.M.-less environment it's all the same.

Dear Dean – …I like that when you drive you have to avoid wild boar…wild boar in the city of pink, where the meat's more gamey and the cheese more old. There is a goal to all this which is monumental regardless of any new bad thing 1st time on earth thought real solution to life after death straight-outta God vision. At least routine is twisted into mass confusion, and something new something new simply always arise Arises from the ashes of…. Where oh where is my Sharpie! I'm in super fine-point hellll. Finally someone heard of **Ben Is Dead*****, the first band (Brent), and we're in Strasbourg and up all night head-banging. The bass player is getting married and with*** **Raising Arizona** ***playing in the "theatre" talk about babies ensues. A Libran who's made up all the rules of life and then pronounces them, lives by them – what he likes and does dictates the rules – and he is 100% living proof positive this is the way it should be. Simple truth, justice and the American Way, Goddamn! And there's a soft, sweet side to that. Kinda sincere, kinda open-book.*****

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* A nickname Troy gave to James because he reminds him of a cave man.

** Maybe that's where the alias A. Frank G. comes from?

I don't care if people think I'm an over-actor. People who think that would call Van Gogh an overpainter. –Jim Carrey

I drink fish-like and smoke fiend. Can't shit and go ask the other t-shirt table to watch mine because their band may be the first opener that doesn't blow hard, but they ask first…and I sit. And I can't sit anymore! I want to dance! Ten hours of sitting is numbing, but we get to watch videos and* The Bride of Frankenstein *is truly a great movie. I want to scam boys because I'm living the environment…but I know I'm not sending out the right hand-jive smoke signals. Smoke.

And, besides all that – Aras • Calas • Paris, or is that Arras • Lenis • Calais. Où suis-je? POW: Now in the laundry mat because even though I'm not getting paid to be t-shirt girl I feel it's a favor so offer any small services I can. Play stewardess in the van. Shovel shit. Actually these boys are especiál and only tease when I sew my buttons on the wrong side of my pants or fall asleep with my backpack on. But there's no advanced state of awareness, not awakening unused portions of the body or brain or subconscious. It's a process, done a million times, and rarely anything new can arise. Arise!

But there is something hidden in the music. The closest I get, besides rambling off alone, is when they play.

I'd been in Strasbourg before, just passing through. As a hungry vegetarian finding a mirage in the form of an Indian restaurant across the street from the train station, and a well-timed two-hour layover. And from this, fond memories of a city are made. Strasbourg, on the Rhine, is so close to the border you forget whether to speak French or German or pay with francs or deutsche marks (though perhaps that will change soon enough with the Euro), and since I don't speak either language nor possess either currency it's not much of an issue. Anyway, the reason for all the confusion is as much locale as the fact that this French city was annexed by the king of France early 18th century, with the townspeople demanding a charter as a free city. In 1871, absorbed by Germany, it was made the capital of the imperial territory of Alsace-Lorraine, but reverted back to France in 1918. A big university city, with the 432-year-old Université de Strasbourg (once attended by the likes of Goethe, Napoléon, and Pasteur) currently enrolling 35,000 French and foreign students.

> **Troy: "The first person we brought to tour went nuts. It was scary. He lit a club on fire, started a riot, and ended up in jail. It's hard to survive tour sometimes. Another one we had to send home in the middle of the U.S. after those couple of times we make sure to warn people. It's not a frickin' pony ride. I knew you'd lose it, I just didn't know when."**

I share a room with Jon. We somehow lock ourselves out and have to climb from James' room up over the roof through the window to get in. I start noticing what kind of dreams I dream depending on the roommate I am paired with. Among others this night I dream of Miik, about him singing "Mack the Knife" and him being Mack the Knife. I don't even recall how "Mack the Knife" goes but later find out he was trying to get in the room for his room key, which we had because he and I had traded rooms earlier, but Jon and I had fallen asleep, so Miik slept in the hall, and I'd felt his presence…as Mack the Knife. He said, "That's my karaoke song!" – the one he sings, the one he's famous for. And otherwise I dream of Troy and he was comforting me, and it was sweet, but mostly ironic because whatever he makes me feel it's never "comforted" – which subconsciously added unsaid depth to our unspoken friendship.

Wed., Sept. 30 – Arras

Locals claim "Arras" is named after a band of rats that stalked the city in the Middle Ages. I didn't have any problems with rats – just a dog. Arras is filled with tunnels for protection because the place was bombed out so many times. If I'd known perhaps I would have chosen to explore those instead….

A squad of teenyboppers are waiting at the club. I'm not in the mood and immediately set off for a walk. There's some forest, which starts off as dirt road commoners seemingly utilize for dumping byproducts of their consumer existence, until it squeezes into a raw trail, and there's not much of a forest here, as I sense city looming through the trees, just beyond. I've been trying my escape within a small island, which only has the capacity to contain my angst and me for mere minutes, creating even more angst to contend with as I struggle to stay emerged while continuing to roam. These hikes are mostly about the illusion of escaping anyway.

I want to take the road less traveled. I mean I force myself to want to take it because otherwise it's all routine. Of course I understand that it could just as easily be an illusion of "less-traveled." I may just be getting tricked into thinking it's this road when in all actuality it's a trap, to get me to do something stupid, so whatever higher power or controlling force that's watching might get a kick.

So avoiding the streets as long as possible, forced into an off-limits area of fences and walls and squeezing and climbing, I stumble upon a small castle with accompanying small garden tended by one who doesn't seem to mind my passing through. It's divine, but then dwindles down to busy country road. Exhaust, no sidewalk. Only appeal is the stream passed with a No Trespassing-marked trail I'd wished I'd taken so I turn the next street hoping to head it off. After the twist of houses there's a large golf course with that stream cutting across. Unsure of the rules of how not to get hit by a golf ball, caution to the wind and all that, I traverse the green. Time edging into this wandering I head for the water, intent on walking it back, but follow it instead into a deadend. My frequent scenarios I should have included with taking the road less traveled are 1) purposefully getting myself lost (touched on elsewhere) and 2) not being able to turn around (i.e. Forge ahead. Don't look back. Is there some Medusa complex I missed in college psychology? Could it be subconscious fear of turning into a pillar of salt? Whatever, I don't like turning around. Maybe I find it a sign of retreat. Failure. Though I know perfectly well that it's often the smarter thing, the greater move. Still, if I push ahead and make it through I always feel better than if I turned back and made it. Maybe I'm dirtier, cut up, tired, hungry…but I like the feel of breaking through. Some barrier. And I make it sound all thoughtful and deep but it's these miniscule efforts that add up to every thing you are.)

I cling to spiky fences which barely exist on land and the foot arbitrarily ducks in to taste the murky water. I easily picture myself returning mixed with pond scum. There's no place in which this route will lead to safe haven. Again it's space closing in on itself and I'm part of the claustrophobic process. The imposing marsh or the marsh upon which I'm imposing is now impassable but by tiny boat and in order to keep forward I must now climb this spiked wire fence into private property inhabited by either herd of cow or bull, and damn why didn't I bring my glasses. They eye me as one always seems to eye another, suspiciously, and I anticipate the attack as I enter this watery field, to the open-air barn with big pieces of metal machinery and then poof into a courtyard where I can view the street from whence I'd originally came. That took longer than a sentence though, and when accomplished I breathed that sigh of relief, only to have it interrupted by a growl and excuse the superlatives but honestly the most ferocious dog I've ever seen except maybe in a movie and like a 3D movie he ran straight at me. A Doberman pinscher perhaps – not good at categorizing species of canine – but it wanted to bite my head off and that's all the categorizing one really needs: "Killer Dog." But I could not move an inch, resigning myself to this attack and whatever outcome it may produce, and in a flash the dog's upon me, making that final leap to pounce. About two feet from mine, his neck snaps back like he's hit a glass wall, and he barks madly over the disappointment. His thick chain strained; if I'd stood there much longer he would have yanked that spike right from the ground. Stunned but coming to, the flush of blood trying to return to my face, I walked slowly in haze – resisting nausea – to the road, heart dragging a few paces behind. And of course didn't look back, pillar of salt, echo of guard dog still barking acrimoniously. A little old man ran after me, trying to decipher this trespasser, and I didn't even bother with French but he could tell I was no thief with the near-death look in my eye and the stuttering breathless shock and he simply nodded and went back to whence he and the dog existed.

When I got back to the school or whatever the place was, I was told the band had just left. Fuck! I ran outside after finally being clued in that they might still be waiting around front and the van was just pulling off. Hopping inside I was so so glad not to be left behind.

Thurs., Sept. 31 – Back to Paris

It's getting harder to resist, I'm pulling powder from the walls, guess we all have wicked friends. But it's the piles and piles of pepper on the shadows and the eyelids, it's the blindness of my close friends and the days and days of nothing… It's getting harder to come back from living lighter than a leaf. It's getting harder to depend on me. Oh, but you leave me no choices, no body, no voices. You leave me no choice, I'm fucked and far away…don't you know I left myself here…don't you know I left myself these days and days of nothing."

– *"Days of Nothing"*, Taste For Bitters

Dear Dean: Last night in Arras I had the on-schedule travel crack-up. Snap crackle. And after the show the singer walks up the long hall towards me – a phased t-shirt girl under neon lights and blank stares – and knows: "You're going to cry." Like that. "You're on top of everything," I tell him, "I need to go downstairs." And excuse myself to the breakdown. And for five quick minutes it's tearful bliss. Maybe the last time I cried was with you.

See, the crack-up was sure to come all right, but to what

What do you do alone in your free time?
Sit and stare a lot.

In the midst of one of my no-warning crushes, I not innocently manipulated Jon to ditch his friends who he wouldn't be seeing for two months in favor of stealing away to have a one-on-one interview. Of course, while he was mainly concerned about politely giving me the chance to talk to him before leaving on the tour, I had that and a couple other things on my mind.

Jon Kroll, Guitar

MAN WITH A HEART OF TITANIUM

One tall mothafucka.

Now, I'm not usually – let's say never – attracted to the super-tall lurchy types. As a matter of fact, you may not find another so low on my built-in attraction meter. Maybe it was broken, maybe Jon was charming, or perhaps I didn't realize how my tastes can vary. (What I ate that day? How reckless I might feel? Unstable I can be?)

We first drive to Fred 62 up Vermont in Los Feliz so he can say a few quick good-byes before spending the night with me.

THE NEW ALBUM

Darby: What do you like and not like about it?
Jon: Minor things. Wish one thing was turned a little louder and one a little quieter.
So musician things that I wouldn't comprehend as a non-musician listener.
I have a hard time listening to it without thinking about all the labor aspects. I wish I could just hear…*sometimes* I can just hear it as music.
I thought I was going to have to wait so long for another album to come out. I didn't think you were going to come back with an album…
When we went away [to Paris] to record? That would have been really bad
Well, Troy was still working on the songs.
When we were in the studio, we were working on it until the last possible moment. The next band was about to come in and we had to have our luggage packed up 'cause the cleaning people were cleaning up and we were just putting on the finishing touches.
That's pressure. So were you under pressure the whole time?
It's always fun, but due to finances there's always pressure. You can't spend as long, you can't fuck around all day on one song. You have to have a general idea what you want to do.
Better than if you nit-pick too much.
Yeah, you can drive yourself crazy and ruin the music anyway. No, it's not like I want all the time in the world.
How long was the recording? Two weeks?
Yeah, something like that. Maybe a couple days over. Recording and mixing. We tend to get obsessive about some things.
I was saying to Troy I like all the little qualities that are kinda hidden around in your songs. He said he wished there was time to do more of that [on this record].
That's always one of the funner parts. 'Cause, I mean, by and large we know how the bulk of the song is going to sound, so it's always the fun part getting to add little noises and things we can tuck away in the song someplace…although sometimes it's not that subtle. [We pass Fred 62] That's actually where we're supposed to go.
Eww, what is it? Oh, that's a place where "celebrity hipsters" go. Because we're doing the celebrity issue I have to know about these things. Didn't it used to be called George's?
Yeah.
Hot spot. I was supposed to review all the celebrity hangouts. And I never recognize a celebrity.
So you face a substantial handicap with this issue?
Yeah.
See, James is really good at sightings. He can spot someone regardless of how little they look like who they are. I'm the opposite. They could be wearing the costume from the movie and I wouldn't recognize them.
They could be saying all their lines from the movie…
Harrison could be dressed as Indiana Jones whipping people and I wouldn't recognize him.
I'd only recognize Val Kilmer.

NOISE NOISE NOISE. WE'RE IN THE RESTAURANT.
Are you going to be able to hear this?
(not certain) Yeah, it's magic.
So, is this going to be a nice interview?
It's going to be about your titanium heart. This is like the Tin Man conquers the universe.
Yeah, it ticks.
It ticks?
When we're not in here I can let you hear it.
(sigh)

We decided to go for a walk, being that we both hadn't done much of it that day. We went East side. Silverlake reservoir. Parked and started our lap around. Since me and my party dress were still flirting I wasn't in the mood to pull out the recorder to interrupt these intimate moments. I mean, what if he noticed and tried to respond? Not going to happen with a tape player in hand, record button pressed…awkward! Of course I should state for the record that nothing even remotely took place, and the crush was another one of my short-lived whimsical milliseconds in a lifetime.

The tape recorder, which stayed in my pocket throughout most of this, mainly recorded the swoosh-swoosh of my jacket rubbing against the microphone with each step. Much of the 360° 'round the reservoir was about his heart:

THE HEART

He had rheumatic fever as a kid, which fucked up his heart. I think it was known he might have problems, but when? For someone who was always on tour, odds were…. It happened in Angouleme, France, 1997. The year prior to this he'd felt weaker. Three weeks before, he had decided to take up exercise. His heart hurt. One morning he awoke coughing up blood and decided to go back to sleep and see if he was still coughing blood later – he was. He stayed in the hospital for four days in Tours, where the doctor assured him he just had an ulcer, had him purchase Maalox, and told him not to drink coffee. They started to drive to Lamonze, where his coughing up blood started to gross out the other band members He'd filled a bottle with it. "We went back to a hospital, still hoping they'd take x-rays, tell me to take pills, and let me go. Instead they said, 'You're not going anywhere.'" They stuck cameras down his throat, up his nose, into his lungs. The next day the band came to visit. Four days later they came and took him to Charles-de-Gaulle airport. They basically stole him from the hospital, because he wasn't supposed to fly without a doctor on the plane with him. It would have cost $25,000. They lied and said he had a doctor. He flew back to Indiana where he ended up having surgery. It cost $50,000. "I'm financially destitute. Forever." The hospital knew he didn't have insurance, but somehow his mom convinced them. It helped that this hospital did lots of research and had just built a new cardiac wing.

They had to flatline him. The trick is, if the heart starts beating right away, it's a good sign. If it doesn't, the patient has to get a pacemaker. John got lucky on that count. He has a titanium heart valve which beats loudly, and a scar down his chest – they had to open up his rib cage. Now he's part of a group of injured beings. He had to work out with old people during his rehabilitation. He's young for this to happen – though it's better for his recovery. He gets his blood checked regularly and has to take medicine once a day at the same time every day. He has to watch things that thicken or thin his blood. For example, he eats cucumbers if he drinks alcohol (which he's not supposed to do, and I think he only did it once while I was on the tour), because the alcohol makes his blood too thin.

HISTORY

Jon and James were born in Milwaukee (James is two years younger). They moved to Indiana when Jon was four, and lived there until he was 10. That's when they moved to Hawaii for 10 years. (When they moved to LA, their mom returned to Indiana. Their dad still lives in Milwaukee.)

The brothers and Troy met through Troy's sister Raya, a goofy, outgoing, friendly punk girl. They became friends as young punkers, hanging out doing punk things. Then they got to know Troy

SCHOOL

In spite of the Hawaiian school system, Jon turned out smart. "I didn't pay much attention in school. I'd have my own projects, my own reading I wanted to do. I think it would be fun to go to school now. I'd be more interested in learning. We were always interested in things that weren't necessarily taught in school."

Long time *Ben Is Dead* contributor and friend Lisa Anne Auerbach knew Jon from his art-school days – and the band in their early LA incarnation. She tells me the Kroll brothers were called "the Twin Towers of Rock." "You think I made that up?" She shakes her head. "They used to call themselves that when they were in Dana Lynn." When I ask if there's anything else interesting to note, she only adds, "Jon was obsessed with the Cardinals. They called him Cardinal. His paintings were red."

Jon went to Otis Parsons, where he earned his bachelor's degree. He started his graduate work in fine art at the Art Center when Chokebore was signed to AmRep and Jon took a leave of absence to record and tour. That was five years ago. "I overstayed my absence."
So you actually thought you might go back?
Basically school cost a whole lot of money to go to and music you got paid to do – and I liked doing both of them, so I chose the one that paid me as opposed to the one that I had to go to school for. Because I still do fine art all the time, I just didn't bother to finish my masters
Do you do the cover art?
It goes in all different ways. Sometimes the band will do it completely, but usually it's a [joint] decision, like the music. It's something that we all agree on; everyone has to agree that they like it.
So this last CD, who did that?
Black Black? My friend Kevin Hanley. I went to art school with him. I actually do visual art with him, performance stuff….
In clubs?
No, galleries.
Of what nature?
People's voices run through amplifiers and delay pedals, and we use dancers in conjunction with, like, wall paintings and sculptural elements…
Something you have to see?
It definitely works better that way.

THE BROTHER

How in the hell can you be in a band with your brother?
How I'm in one?
Yeah, I can't imagine. I have a sister…I can't imagine. She or I would be dead today.
Oh, I don't know. We shared a bedroom growing up our whole lives. We were always friends 'cause we had an older sister and she was a tyrant, so we became friends because we bonded against the tyrant.
How old are you?
We're a year and a half apart. I'm the older one. (pause) He's the younger one.
Okay, so if you do fight, what do you fight about?
Oh, I don't know. I mean, that's when I guess we seem like siblings. If we fight, it's always about something stupid. We don't generally fight that much at all. I mean, we really don't. Generally one of us will harass the other to do something. We'll just yell at each other a minute or two and then drop it. I was in fourth grade and he was in second grade when we decided we were going to form a band, and we used to go to music stores and look at guitars and basses and say, Okay I'm going to get that one, you're going to get this one, and we'll form a band. Once we were in high school, we actually did it. We got the instruments and formed the band, and after doing it for a couple of years we actually sounded somewhat like a band.

THE BANDS

I played trumpet/trombone in eighth grade, and I wasn't very good. It didn't interest me. I had to play music to get out of sports. It was fun learning how to read and play music, but, by that point, I was already interested in punk rock. Ever since we were little kids I'd wanted to form a band. I knew I wanted to play guitar and bass.
Was your mom supportive?
Yeah, even Chokebore would practice in our living room. She was extremely accepting, at least.
And was the first band Dana Lynn?
No, in the first band, actually, Jocko [Weyland, *BID* contributor] was the singer.
Oh. So what was that band called?
Nok Mub.
Nok Mub? What's that mean?
It's really ridiculous. It was…[Jocko] was from Denver, or Estos Park in Colorado, and in that area there was a band called Bum Kon, and it's Bum Kon spelled backwards. And Bum Kon was some figure, some person who actually killed some people somewhere in the world. You can ask Jocko. But this band took this name and Jocko moved to Hawaii and reversed the name and we took it for our name.
Was there some reason… were you going to be the opposite of this band, or…?
Oh no. [We took it] because it was good enough. The name didn't really matter. I think the only tape we ever did with Jocko singing…all the music was a ukulele and Jocko screaming. And then we would rehearse but it would just be noise all the time
So you guys were never actually on stage?
Well, not with Jocko. After he left, James took over singing, and I think before we broke up we played one show – three songs, and one of them was a cover.
Oh, that's cool. Three-song set. How'd it go?
I think the people actually enjoyed it. At that time, the Hawaii scene was pretty supportive. People were pretty much into people doing stuff, putting together bands and playing shows. They didn't really spend much time attacking the bands, they were just happy there was some new punk rock. By the time we played out it actually sounded like music, it actually had chords and stuff.
Then when did it turn into Dana Lynn?
A ways down the road
There were more bands in between?
Oh yeah, I think at one point I was in five bands at once. There were just a million goofy bands because there's nothing else to do in Hawaii… I would have a couple primary bands, then join other people's bands. James ended up joining this one band, and then he pulled me into it, and at a certain point I left the band to go to art school, and then after I left he pulled Troy into it to take over on guitar. So that was sorta the beginning of James, Troy, and me playing together, even though we were never all three playing at once. And then I moved back to Hawaii for a period of time, and me and James and Troy decided we wanted to form a band together because the bands we were in were not any one of our main bands, it was something founded by other people. So the three of us wanted to form a band where it was the three of us doing all the writing. It was more loose, because the band they were in was more of a hardcore band.
And how old were you guys then?
I don't know. I was in art school, average age around 20.
So what is the breakdown of the songwriting in Chokebore?
Whoever has a good idea that day.
So it's a total mix? Each brings in songs?
Well, Troy does the vocals and lyrics. Musically it's anything from one person writing the entire song to two or three of us writing it. Sometimes the songs are pretty close to being finished when they're brought in, and sometimes it's just a couple chords and we'll screw around with it until it turns into a full song.
And does each person take credit?
We always write "All songs written by Chokebore."
But are there certain songs, someone more heavy, someone more fast…
We all tend to like to write slow songs. My brother is probably the most natural at writing the more upbeat ones, while I like the more dissonant notes they find irritating.
***They* find them irritating?**
No, they like them, but they also get irritated by them. They just say I'm beeping. Making beeping noises.
Just random beeping noises.
Pretty much.
I like random beeping noises.
I know, they're nice.

It starts to rain, coming down to the point it's rolling off his head, dripping down his nose. He only wears a thin leather jacket that I doubt adds much protection. Talking so much about his heath problems I think he's certainly going to get some kind of infection, pneumonia. He insists he's on so many antibiotics (penicillin) he doesn't get sick anymore (he did get sick). We make it all the way 'round and I drive him home, both of us dribbling wet.

In the nature of man, we find three principall causes of the quarrell. First, Competition; Secondly, Diffidence; Thirdly, Glory. –Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* degree and when was up for grabs. "Days of Nothing," which even though I love, I finally for the first time felt the true meaning of, was the thing to push me over. It was something about that inexplicable hollow emptiness Troy expresses that I was now living. I had to sit outside this night with the t-shirts. And the sound came to me through walls and down corridors, and the echo recreated the eeriness of the recorded version. I pretend he's playing it for me. "Yeah, when we first recorded that song I played it for my friend Baris," Troy later explains, "and he ran out of the house and wouldn't talk to me for three weeks."

Maybe just a part of the problem is among all this surrounding sexual desire and need, I have felt practically sexless. It's like during the riots. Prior to them I shoplifted at least once a day. When I saw myself being represented on TV, desperate consuming insect, it was years before I could even snatch butterscotch from the grocery store's bulk bin. So now I view sex in this desperate way, this unmeaningful and involuntary way, which has no intellect or value or guts and I'm shocked sexless. James even makes bets with me about blow jobs… "I'll give you 10ff [French francs] if you give someone head tonight" – you know, something to that effect but he's funnier, and I demand that it's not enough. Because he sees it from the male's point of view, a blow job being no big deal, sure. And I'm still undone, kinda amped because crying releases not only emotions, but some good hormones to boot, and we go to an inbred Belgium post-hippie Partridge Family party where no one is over 17 except us and the mother – an old white-haired hipster who smokes fine cigarettes and runs the club. I find it terribly unbearable no matter how nice they are and excuse myself because writing and sleeping alone in the van holds all my attention. But despite very specifically knowing the way back, I subconsciously deliberately make a wrong turn. Why am I getting myself lost again?! I just don't learn. This is my inner dialogue even as I do it. Walk by some bar and two old men are staring – always sure to attract these sort of Middle-Eastern types. A construction worker's free-handed hoot or Mexican cad's "aye mamacita" would be good for my egoless ego at this point – I'm still dependent on that need to *feel* like a woman in the eyes of a man. And then, from some dark doorway, out runs a young guy, and he's yelling, trying to talk, but I'm cold and cold-shoulder him because I must keep walking or freeze and *the van!* But he is persistent, and I don't even try to speak in French because if he wants to waste my time he's going to have to make the efforts – keep walking. I must admit though, he is gorgeous. He tells me he saw me from the window, something about my eyes, and that he's not drunk. That he doesn't drink. See, he's a boxer, and his body, which I eventually discover, is taut and sparkly sweet as any could possibly be, as any I've ever felt before. 23. I lie I'm 25 but should have lied 35 to give him a thrill. I take even Chokebore's prowling to an extreme and scam with a guy right off the street, who I don't know the least bit about, and he's not even a groupie to give some illusional common ground. Just some foxy guy who runs out of buildings when he sees "a pretty girl walk by."

Okay, yeah, well, that was fine. "You walk that way"; I point away from the van. "Oh, I'm going this way." "No," I try again, "you walk that way." "Oh, yeah, okay." He understands, agrees, and we walk separate ways, not even pretending we have any reason to communicate ever again and that makes it nice.

> *Chandra fucked my loneliness away, at least for a minute or two, a lemonade. I just fucked my loneliness away, it helped me for a minute or two, a lemonade. I just beat my loneliness away nothing else left here to do, a lemonade.*
>
> – *"Lemonade,"* Anything Near Water

So my night of isolation and tending to my article is cut short. I get back a little, um, later than planned. Even the boys are back in the hotel hours before me. When I first said I wanted to sleep in the van they all thought I was losing it. "You don't want to sleep in the van, Darby. We have room in the hotel." But I *was* losing it and their discussing my sleeping in the van was ruining the whole prospect. "Just don't *worry* about it!" They gave up trying to convince me, but only after squelching the spark from my self-preserving maneuver. Now I was in the van, and it *was* cold. I pulled the curtains and put an opened umbrella up in the huge front window to block the view and the light, which blared right in (no use worrying about bad luck). I removed my stinky clothes (never did get a chance to wash those pants during the entire month-long trip), and kept my thermals on, and borrowed someone's Patagonia-style sweatshirt with my down jacket over it, a stolen airplane blanket over it all…and froze my butt off. It made all my muscles and joints tight, in an already tight sleeping area, and I didn't know what to think, so I read by flashlight and tried not to have regrets, about anything – even of not having bet James the 10 francs. Very soon I was awakened to an alive plaza of people off to school and work. Jzack didn't fuck my loneliness away, but well, I didn't let him – not for a moment or two. Anyway, I can't fuck my loneliness away; it's not *really* loneliness.

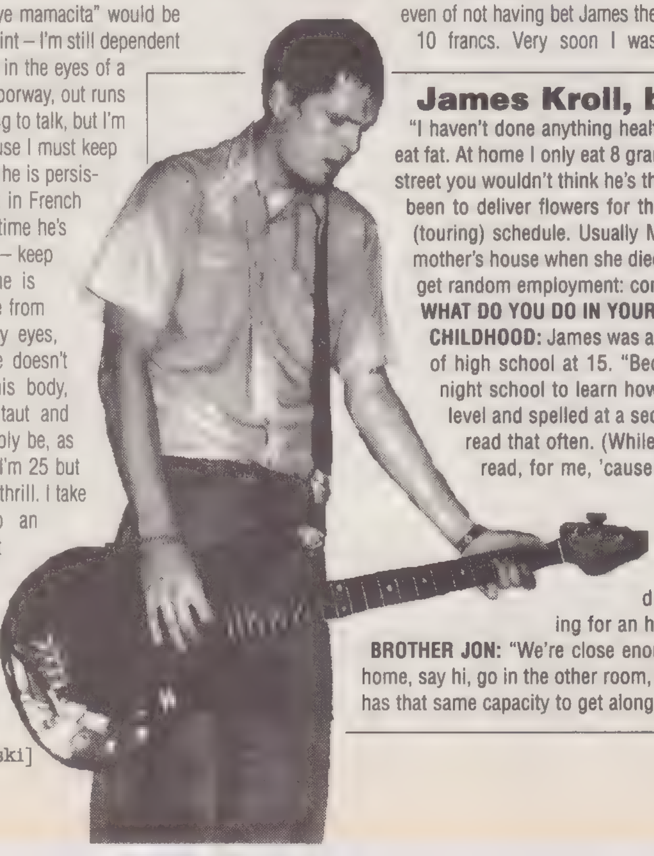
Fri., Oct. 1 – Paris

James's B-Day – Troy gets him poppers and a sex mag. I walk a mile to the only open tabac to buy him two 25-count packs of cigarettes, which I smoke half of. I think he'd forgotten Jon's last birthday, so no luck there. Miik sorta ignores the whole idea. Anyway, these people have NO money, and know how not to spend it.

BLACK BLACK

I've started to enjoy the Jägermeister by now. Like Schnapps it's something that without a certain conducive context, you would never find yourself partaking of. Pour shots into the lid and lick it down catlike. Not attractive, but it's hard to chug cough syrup. Luckily this is part of the band's rider; it'd be sad to have to pay for it (and later when the tour ends I do pay for some and can't drink a damn drop of the disgusting sticky goop). Tonight Troy is worrying about women, Jon is off somewhere, James goes to buy hash from some seedy drug dealers off the street, and there's supposed to be a band meeting soon. But Miik and I stay in his room where he shares in the Jäger and lost sense of time – I don't think he *needs* to be at the band meeting anyway, as no one really infers such. He talks a lot about mom, brother, family, Australia. "I studied drums for two years, every day, six hours a day. I moved back to

"On Tour U Know What U're going To Be Doing, U Just Don't Know Who WiT." –james



[photo by dieter wuschanski]

James Kroll, bass

"I haven't done anything healthy in seven years. I smoke two packs a day. But I don't eat fat. At home I only eat 8 grams a day." He sounds almost proud. To see James on the street you wouldn't think he's the kind of guy that counts his fat calories. His day job has been to deliver flowers for the last two years. I guess they're pretty flexible with his (touring) schedule. Usually Miik and James have day jobs. Troy inherited his grandmother's house when she died; it's in a little community near Culver City. Jon seems to get random employment: computer work, art, putting on clubs.

WHAT DO YOU DO IN YOUR SPARE TIME? "Take walks and chain smoke."

CHILDHOOD: James was a little punk rocker growing up in Hawaii. He dropped out of high school at 15. "Because I was dyslexic. I dropped out and went to adult night school to learn how to read. I did that for two years. I read at third-grade level and spelled at a second-grade level when I dropped out. That's why I don't read that often. (While others in the band read, he drinks.) It's not relaxing to read, for me, 'cause I strugggle with so many of the words. I have to concentrate. When I dropped out I had Fs in all my classes. When you're in school and can't read you tend to stop really trying. Schools in Hawaii, the education system was not very good at the time. I had also dropped out of half of 7th and 8th grades. I went to tutoring for an hour a day, then watched *Little House on the Prairie.*"

BROTHER JON: "We're close enough that we can totally ignore each other. He can come home, say hi, go in the other room, and not talk to me after that. I think everyone in the band has that same capacity to get along together."

Australia after that, and lived there over half a year before coming to play with [Chokebore]." He goes silent occasionally when talking about Australia, gazes beyond here and now back to some great time past, shaking his head in dismay. "I lived in fucking dreamland, I don't know why I left. My brother had a restaurant by the beach. I would surf all day, and help out in the restaurant if they needed help. Before I left for Australia, Sarah of the Devics mentioned Chokebore needed a drummer. But just before this I'd said "fuck music." Then Christian [Madrigal, the drummer at the time] had ear problems, and Troy wrote me a letter asking if I wanted to play. I didn't know what to say – my life was very good there. Every time I try to stop playing drums something takes me back. Troy sent me the CD, and the lyrics hooked me. I thought it was something I could contribute to." The more he drinks the more his underexposed jaded side unfolds, revealing one of his main concerns this moment in time: lack of excitement.

We're there quite some time and James hasn't returned (which makes us worry every time a police siren goes off). I wonder if he went to try the 10-franc sex machine: A metal whacking machine – that doesn't actually exist, except in some strange fantasy region of James' hypothalamus. A while later, with the beer mostly drunk, we go to my room where the meeting is winding down. It's casual, but serious. Miik and I sit, he listens attentive and sober, and after ten minutes without saying a word, he stands like he's holding up the wall and tries to gracefully excuse himself. He's wasted. Everyone in the room, dumbstruck, is silently staring, without clue he was even buzzed. He has a wholesome sweetness that's cubed when intoxicated, bestowing bear hugs, telling you how wonderful you are, with a big boyish grin, happy to be alive. Next day he's quiet and unintrusive and fits into the van scenario to perfection. Besides the drumming I imagine this is the quality that helped establish him as a true Chokebore member.

The boys leave while Olivier remains. Tonight I'm sharing the room with the hyper promoter (who after reading the sex in *You're Up!* will not quit). French TV and Jägermeister. Olivier, all briefcase and ulcers – the business nerd. Tonight on a jagged liver-energy high he wants to go out dancing and freaks to Depeche Mode on M6. We're watching because one of Chokebore's new videos is supposed to be in rotation. Olivier is especially out of control because he's excited. The band has asked him to be something more like their European manager. He wants to talk to me about running his LA office. I'd do anything for Chokebore and would love to help and make big plans and devote my life and all that but at the moment it's late and I'm nodding off. But it's a recurrent theme that if you want to sleep you will be kept awake. Is that a boy thing? They want to be the first asleep? If they can't sleep you can't? And he's talking endless business to me and I keep saying, "Yes yes tomorrow yes please." But he won't stop. I entertain the idea for a while, we joke about who would be boss and create a fake "Charlie," like the Angels (ours is named George). "They need to be on a BIG stage." He's talking hundreds of thousands of records sold and BIG deals and BIG money and good promotion and so forth. He's not only devoted, but business savvy – a perfect manager, for France at least. "So, are you interested? Will you run the LA Private Joke office?" No life, no career, maybe I'll even give up writing. "Yes, yes, let's talk about it tomorrow." And once I doze off he reiterates, "So what about it?" "Yes yes I'm totally into it. Yes, I have office space, I have people, yes, we can do it…tomorrow." An hour of unrelenting torture, no *joke*, he gives up and passes out. He hardly brings it up after this, though, I think he thinks I must not be a good business person because I wouldn't discuss it right then…and maybe because I'm too drunk when selling the merch.

Sat., Oct. 2 – Belgium, somewhere

We put *Coma* on – or I do because I'm the only one who's figured out how to operate the TV/VCR system. "Are you sure?" I ask Troy because I'm catching on to certain sensitivities, and in this case there's a red-flag warning. I knew he'd get creeped out but he didn't believe me, and ten minutes into it he demands it be replaced. "Troy, what did you *think* the movie was going to be about?" He grins, "Happy people sleeping."

So I'm forced to put in *Spinal Tap* instead – breaking the *Coma* mood, but now we're faced with bad touring karma. It's like anyone should know better than to Ouiji in their own home – you never, *ever* watch *Spinal Tap* when you're a band free-fall on the road, susceptible to any and all "If anything can go wrong it will"s. (Why, after a gazillion views, is *Spinal Tap still* funny?)

But the band wasn't faced with *too many* karmic-horrors. Except that this show was added on last minute, some silly contest including a bunch of local bands, with Chokebore as the featured act. I can picture Spinal Tap walking in, turning to their manager, and asking, What kinda bloody joke is this? What it was was a small brick rec. room with a bar. The band takes one look and the moaning and groaning continues until the drinking begins and the preteen girls show up.

We sorta get lost trying to find the dressing room/food area, but there *is* no real "dressing room" *or* food – beyond some fake pizza and homemade liquor/wine called Matonk – so they give us cash instead. We end up with the best fish sandwich I've eaten beyond England and des pommes frites. My nervous system is shot from two strong European coffees, and our after-lunch jaunt to a bowling alley to play video games leaves my hand partially paralyzed for two days from a car game with heavy vibrations from the stick shift and an irrationally tense desire to win.

> *Bruce Lee began his early training in the fluid movements of Tai Qi. As a young man he became a devotee of Wing Chun an ancient form of Kung Fu that dates back to the Shaolin Temple. It is based on speed and reflex and agility rather than brute strength. As this excerpt from the* Warriors Two *demonstrates:*
>
> *Master: [holds out leaf between fingers] Stretch out two fingers. You must try to catch it when I let go.*
>
> *Student: [misses] Master: Do you realize why you can't catch it. Because when your eyes see it fall, you brain signals your hand nerves to react. But there is a delay. So we're aiming to minimize that delay. That's why Win Chun concentrates on touch and speed. Practice! There's no other way.*
>
> *–from the video* The Deadliest Art

Earlier that day, talk about The Now ensues and coincidentally I'm on The Now chapter of *Electric Kool-aid*, "the Unspoken Thing", and it's desperate locked in the confines, sharing space and the space stays the same and you can't change that. And you sense things beyond and you naturally radiate and draw upon these things, these unspoken things.

But these people (these authors, artists…), and this is where it all seems useless, they all thought it before, and I can't see the use, because what better place did they end up in? Am I looking too far into the future? Should I be sticking with the moment here? The Now second being turned into a minute being turned into an hour, being churned into yesterday. These people just die anyway. And they achieve fame, they write a good book or two, they may even inspire a few people – but to what end? But, this is not about coming up with excuses not to produce. You don't produce – like not shitting – you die, so there are no options there. And the desire for fame – on some simple level, why the fuck not? I can't worry about that anymore. I can't worry about money. I don't even pretend to worry about the social order's choice destiny for me.

Dean: …Life goes by so fast. Only in a heightened state of awareness can one capture it all, and turn a minute into an hour by expansion of time through intensity. But how can you convince one who can't stand "the waiting" to make the time more…amplified? Sometimes the reaction/solution has to be the exact opposite of what you think it should be. Instead of reacting to forces by opposing you must react by utilizing their own movement. Of course it's basic science, martial arts, and why Tai Qi is awesome. And maybe why I'm in a hotel room in Belgium right now with pink blue poly/cotton sheets fresh laundry smell and boy…

But really, maybe the talk about the Now is one of the deepest I'm let in on, not that I've felt particularly excluded from conversation. And even James participates for a moment before he scoffs it off, "…and *this* is the past, and *this* is the past…" Sure, we've thought it since…at least the first time we smoked pot, if not elementary school. But why not bring it up again? We haven't gotten closer to a solution – more likely a lot farther…from Now. The older you get the more in the past you become. And McKenna and his TimeBumps and Einstein and *Star Trek* and it's just around the part of the Acid Test where Wolfe is quoting Ken Kesey on lag time:

> *"A person has all sorts of lags built into him*, Kesey is saying. One, the most basic, is the sensory lag, the lag between the time your senses receive something and you are able to react. One-thirtieth of a second is the time it takes, if you're the most alert person alive, and most people are a lot slower than that. Now, [Neal] Cassady is right up against that 1/30th of a second*

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* Historical, social, psychological.

> *barrier. He is going as fast as a human can go, but even he can't overcome it. He is a living example of how close you can come, but it can't be done. You can't get any faster than that. You can't through sheer speed overcome the lag. We are all of us doomed to spend our lives watching a movie of our lives – we are always acting on what has just finished happening. It happened at least 1/30th of a second ago. …The lag has to be overcome some other way, through some kind of total breakthrough.*
>
> –*Tom Wolfe,* Electric Kool-aid Acid Test

So Troy is backstage and I'm on the way to drunk and when he talked to me that night sharing the hotel room and got all personal I was too tired to say anything substantial. Now I try to offer something so I mention the idea of living 100% in The Now would mean you are so completely aware and alive in the moment that, like in extreme conditions (near death) it can seem as if time has stopped, and every cell is paying attention, every molecule is ON. Waiting in the van doesn't have to mean *nothing* is happening. You can turn the waiting around, because at that moment a million things *are* happening – if you actually paid attention to it all you would add infinity into that moment, instead of it being a moment ignored, bored, the moment would become fractilized or crystallized and have more depth and dimension, therefore contain more, therefore hold more, therefore seem longer yet more full. The bending of time. It shouldn't matter where you are to want to be 100% alive, and if you are 100% in every moment…. I've almost convinced myself at this point and despite it seeming utterly far-fetched, I mean after experiencing the weakening effects of the van first-hand, it *sounds* great. For Troy though, the idea of extending time like that, extending time *in the van,* when all he really wants is to be at the next show, playing, is not a possibility. *But what else is there!* Always back to death… "But you could be dead!"

He sits with his guitar. Lonely and solitary in a way it makes me depressed, quiet. Oh, I think that's the only thing I actually did manage to say to him in the hotel room that night – that he made me sad. Which bummed him out (and we never did share a room again). He tunes and plays me a little of something he's been working on. I like everything he does – that's why I'm here.

"This song is called "Stairway to Heaven". It's about the stairway…to heaven."

There's some kind of mistake and I end up with my own hotel room. I hand wash as much as I can and luxuriously drape undies across racks and countertops. Not that anything dries – Europe's cold penetrates all, so usually it's another day hanging in the van with the help of the heater, but at least it's a head start. The brothers are getting stoned. James discusses his daily schedule at home, which equally divides up the day: Eight hours of sleep, eight hours of work, eight hours of being fucked up. It sounds reasonably realistic. I go back to my room and turn on the television. There are these shows that air during dead time, which are almost more enjoyable than the incomprehensible foreign-language broadcasts. Outer space, driving around in the passenger seat of a car, the fish tank. Tonight we travel on a train – front seat roller-coaster view – through Koa Mohomonkoa. If it wasn't 4 a.m. I could get more stoned and watch this for my unsober eight hours – but maybe it's been eight already.

Sat., Oct. 2 – St. Germain

Dean: …The plan for every good boy? One 17-year-old over easy. And it looks tonight there's good pickins. I'm disinterested and miles away. It's cold here. And I'd sleep in the van if I hadn't already experienced the harsh reality of sleeping there October, Northern Europe. Temperature dropping every day. Got my comfort from Claire the bulldyke last night – who kept shoving cigarettes in my empty hands, arms around my shoulders. She wrote me a note: A ta jante mon amie peur etre d'un joir? And now comfort in a few other groupies who hang about the t-shirt table between bands. Regulars who travel 700km to see Chokebore. And a French guy who speaks a little English and Spanish and now I can COMMUNICATE! When the wall is down, when it's okay I don't know which language it is I'm speaking; filling in all the gaps with a mix of three languages alone I can't master. But I'm a front and center groupie and it's pins and needles sitting here while they play and I'm stranded in a cold lobby with a chair. "No, we don't have any small girl shirts in green!" I guess I left the box at the previous show. And I sit. No possible basketball game. No possible action, besides oral/drug stimulation and sex and sleep. To move I make great efforts; walk to lose myself in every damn town. Today I even discover a dance room with a lock on the door and enclose myself inside, and dance. Alone. You just can't beat it sometimes. The silence. Alone even noise can become silence.

[photo by dieter wuschanski]

The band left without me for dinner so I roamed around a cute French Beverly Hills – if Beverly Hills was older and had more character. Ate quiche and read by a big church with an endless flood of old people pouring out of it. Earlier I'd found the epitome of the perfect haunted house. Like all haunted houses were created with this as its mentor – Herman Munster would have been impressed. I kept thinking there were fires, but the smoke I was inhaling was from everyone burning their trash. I stomped through museums with sculptured courtyards. St. Germain is for upper class ex-Parisians who can afford a mansion just outside of Paris.

I hear the show is one of their best. It's a frantic crowd. This is the last I'll see of Olivier – he doesn't bother to say goodbye. Instead he leaves with the fucking fanny pack I hate – which means I can only wear my pants with pockets for the rest of the shows – merde!

Sun., Oct. 4 – Paris to Koln

Dean: Paris for the day off. The jaded traveler wonders why. Why not just move on – we've already spent so many days in gay Paris. But now the city syncs. Even the grey tones cobblestone and umbrellaless rain. Over Seine and dale. Eating the French version of American pizza, which I think is supposed to be Sicilian with long luscious slices of WOW! a vegetable, which would taste completely worth 18ff if only the dough in the middle was cooked. So I walk with groupie Helen – who's come all the way from Bordeaux. Helen the physical anthropologist whose thesis is going to be on the analysis of 11 Neanderthal teeth. We walk and walk and every time I walk I don't want to stop – like this morning when I find this opulent city west of Paris flush with forest and here I could successfully hide all day. And walking with Helen is calming. We make our way through Cour Carré, courtyard of the Louvre. It mutates into ancient Mexico for a moment; with my bad eyesight and a squint. The stone buildings become crumbling pyramids, the tourists fizzle away. Until back on the street with the hot chestnut vendors and miniature autos without smog control devices whizzing noisily… Destination point, Châtelet. Always Les Halles.

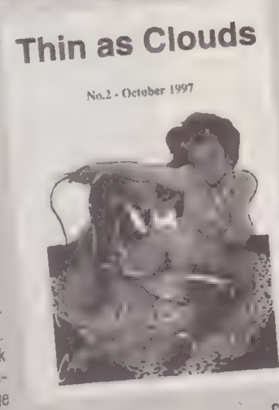
Mon., Oct. 5 – Koln

Rero, short for Vero, short for Vera, short for Veronique, because Troy can pronounce it better, has come along for a few days' travel. She hops into the van and bumps her head and is initiated into the experience. For the first time I see Troy smile without it being forced or empty. The wicked glint in his eye is sparked up, without having to be on stage.

Last night we stay in a Formula 1, plastic super-automated Motel 6, a kind of European peon pit stop. It's the real pit-stop kinda place, where the main goal is simply to rest and recharge to hit the road. Everything self-sanitizes and the antithesis of homey. All except one unique fake art piece in the hall, which captures a poster waterfall behind white trellis, and fake potted ivy and flowers that are sprouting in front. And it's so makeshift hideous my eyes shield me from seeing it and only Jon the artist is able to make us focus our attention on the phenomenon. It *is* real. A Kodak moment – though none of the pictures with my Tiger $2 plastic camera with five-year-old film will come out. Onward there are bunk beds that remind one of a kid's bedroom, wanting proper racer stripes and bold red and blue colors.

I love creating stars. To some extent I have done that with Ivana. To a certain extent I have done that with Marla. I have really given a lot of women great opportunity. Unfortunately, after they are a star, the fun is over for me –Donald Trump

THe fans



Date: Thu, 4 Mar 1999
From: hrougier@minitel.net (HELENE ROUGIER)
Subject: ABOUT CHOKEBORE

Pourquoi aimer ce groupe plus que tout autre? Peut-etre a cause d'un album decouvert par hasard et qui vous fascine, vous envoute des la premiere ecoute. On se dit alors qu'aucun disque auparavant ne vous avait jamais fait ca. et puis les autres suivent et la magie opere toujours. Ce sont ces rythmes lancinants, la force latente des chansons, la confusion des sentiments qu'elles vous procurent, tristesse et gaiete tout a la fois, et cette energie, decuplee a l'extreme en concert. Quand, en plus, on connait la passion que ces quatre garcons vouent a leur musique, on a envie d'envoyer tous ses amis voir le meilleur groupe du monde sur scene pour qu'ils en resortent comme nous avec ce sourire de bonheur sur les levres.

–**Helene Rougier** (Bordeaux)

Date: Thu, 4 Mar 1999
From: "Severine" <ZZE98SP@sheffield.ac.uk>
Subject: me myself and chokebore

Pourquoi Chokebore? Si je le savais. Des guitares, hurlantes et lanscinantes a la fois, une voix blessee, chargee de spleen amer, modulee, douloureuse. Des pauses. Des instants suspendus, durant lesquels on attend qu'une chose, le retour de la melodie. Un son, torture, depressif, lumineux. Des chansons concues comme des enigmes, avec une toute petite porte. Des mots hermetiques, mais qui s'immiscent, rongent la substance du cerveau, s'installent, phagocytent, deviennent une partie de soi. Chokebore se merite. Ne se laisse pas capturer du premier coup, comme un animal blesse a mort qui lutte encore pour la beaute de la lumiere du jour. Il faut du temps. Mais une fois qu'il s'est donne, le son reste la, partout dans soi. Chaque respiration, battement, pulsation, mouvement, tout prend un sens different. Que m'a donc fait ce son, cette matiere impalpable et volatile, de si irremediable? Elle fait partie de moi, maintenant. Le langage me resiste presque pour en parler. Apres tout ce n'est jamais que de la musique... Une chose non-permanente dans l'absolu, presque une illusion sensitive. Mais elle reste. Rencontrer ceux qui creent le son qui m'a le plus bouleversee fut a la fois la chose la plus importante et la plus destabilisante de mon existence - si tout cela veut bien dire quelque chose. Apprehender l'humain derriere la matiere, toucher du doigt l'etre organique. Realiser que le son ne se cree pas spontanement de lui-meme. Maintenant que je connais bien ces quatre grands gaillards deguingandes, rien n'a change, bizarrement, et ce malgre mes craintes. L'aura est toujours la, rien n'est desacralise. La magie est pure, encore et toujours, et le cri est encore plus beau. Humain, trop humain.

–**Severine** (Bordeaux)

From: DAnkenman@aol.com
Subject: chokebory borey
Date: Sun, 31 Jan 1999

I first came across Chokebore when working at Off the Record (also the first place I ever saw *Ben Is Dead)* in San Diego. We received a *Motionless* promo, and I thought their video on the *Dope, Guns*… AmRep comp was pretty cool. Frank heard of them thru Jocko around the same time. That was probably five years ago. First SAW them at the Casbah when they toured with the Cows, but I was far too concerned with drinking in preparation for seeing the Cows, and regretably I did not really pay attention,

Then I had a major revelation about two or three years ago when I begrudgingly went to see a roommate's band at the Transmission Theater here in SF. I thought, well at least something potentially cool will follow (Chokebore). Seconds after they took the stage, I was transfixed. It was a strange night – I was pulled to the front of the stage almost against my will, while my girlfriend at the time was wigging because somebody had a baby underneath this staircase at the back of the club.

After that, I bought the albums and they quickly became one of my favorite bands. Over time, I sent Troy our videos, he responded positively…we agreed to hook up at SXSW in 98.

We followed them for several days/dates starting in Austin. We shot probably 20 hours of footage (film and video). We cut together three videos for the as of yet unreleased domestically *Black Black*. They are: "You are the Sunshine of my Life"; "Where is the Assassin?"; "The Perfect Date." Some or all of them have played on M6 in France.

Other videos we've done include: Cows "Organized Meat" (played on MTV's "Indie Outing"); Geraldine Fibbers "You Doo Right". We've also done some TV commercials for Epitaph and Hollywood Records.

Also, Frank has directed two fairly notorious underground films…the classic rock n roll short "Red & Rosy" and the explosive feature length "Love God." You should definitely ask him about this stuff

As for our what's coming up for us....we just cut a new directors reel and we've sent it out to almost every major and semi-major label. We'll see what comes out of that. Personally, I am also preoccupied with doing something for this band Bardo Pond.

About Necessary Evil International: We've been together since 1995. Together, we produce, direct and edit motion picture portraits. We never ask musicians to lip-synch or perform in a specific manner. Our process involves shooting an entire live show with multiple cameras, mixing various film and video formats. Our only rule while shooting is to avoid impeding the performance. In the editing suite, we synch the live performance to the studio-produced CD track. Fusing a lush studio recording with raw live footage produces a synergistic audiovisual dynamic not found in conventional live videos… a collection of moving snapshots… moment driven time capsules.

–**Darren Ankenman** (San Francisco)

From: Frank (FGROW@aol.com)

My first Chokebore tape was a handoff from the notorious Kill Zinesters winebago pilot, Jocko Weyland *(Does everyone on the planet have some connection to Jocko? We must seriously investigate this phenomenon! –ed)* We were living in NYC in what, maybe 1994?, and I had just totally burned out on the extreme indy rock and grindcore thing, having od'd on just about everything on AmRep and Earache. I sought refuge in techno and early ambient, stuff like Moby, Aphex Twin, and Plasticman. So when Jocko gave me a copy of the first Chokebore tape I wasn't interested until he said they were ex-surfer/skaters transplanted from Hawaii to LA and their drummer was a skate pro who has to sleep in a chair (and something else about snorting ground up aspirin maybe?) That appealed to me, so I gave the tape a spin, but lost interest – too dirgy. The tape went into a storage box and hasn't seen the light of day since. Then maybe three years later, my motion picture production partner Darren was raving about this band Chokebore, and I was like yeah yeah yeah. I had just finished making *Love God*, a feature film where every scene is driven by a different song – around 80 total – and most were of the AmRep, Sympathy For the Record Industry, Touch and Go blasting guitar variety, so again I was burned on guitar rock. But Darren kept raving and raving and finally he sent me a tape of *Anything Near Water*. I am rarely so moved by music. That tape stayed in my walkman for almost a whole year. Sounds stupid but the shit is profound beautiful, ugly, gentle, aggro, it's all that. My favorites are when Troy's voice swerves between being demented and angelic. And each band member is cool, and has a real distinct presence and personality on stage, which is rare. Their most recent release, *Black Black*, gives me hallucinations. Certain music makes me see things, it's these musicians I seek out to collaborate with on music video stuff. Darren and I hooked up with Chokebore and made three videos based on live shows. I would love to do a more elaborate video for "Speed Of Sound," one with the band's burning animated obliterated body parts playing during the song ("I died in a fire..."), but it's too expensive at the moment. Darren and I just sent out nearly 40 copies of our videos to just about every major and sorta-major record label, besides gettin video work for ourselves, we're hoping Chokebore'll get signed and get some money to get into a studio and really let loose. I love their sound and production on all their releases, but they're totally ready to grow, and a good studio and producer could really provide new opportunities. Definitely my favorite band, and one of LA's most under-appreciated treasures.

–**Frank Grow** (Los Angeles)

Date: Fri, 26 Feb 1999 00:16:55 +0100
From: Thin as Clouds
<asmund@chokebore com>
Subject: Re: the bore

Well, I discovered Chokebore in 1994 through a friend of mine, whom had gotten his hands on a copy of the Clusterfuck compilation CD. To be honest, I didn't really care much about Chokebore after the first couple of times of listening to their songs. But little after little I started to like their songs more and more. "Throats" became a favorite. I copied the songs onto a tape and played them repeatedly on my walkman for several weeks.

A month or two later another friend of mine bought both *Motionless* and *Anything Near Water*, and after listening to them a few times I was convinced that the foursome from Oahu, Hawaii was (and is) the best band around. A few months later I bought the albums for my own collection and when their third album, *A Taste For Bitters*, was released I rushed to the store and bought it. Then I rushed back home again and cranked it up. It was, as I had predicted, fabulous

My favorite album is still *Anything Near Water* But after hearing their fourth album I'm not so sure anymore. I love all songs Chokebore has made so far, but if I had to pick some absolute favorites it would be "City Rings," "Van McCoy," "Motionless," "Jo Stow," "Brittle & Depressing," "Where Is The Assassin?" "I Love The Waiting" and "Cleaner" (ANW). Lately I've listened a lot to their cover version of a Dave Carr (a friend of theirs who lives in SF) song called "Water," which they played at Fnac in Paris fall '98. At that show they also played another cover, "Jesus Cried," a song Troy's mother sang to him when he was a child. Those two songs are really beautiful, just fabulous.

I don't have many thoughts about Troy's lyrics. I'm one of those people that don't listen to the lyrics. I just listen to the music, it's their sound that touches me, and I especially enjoy the live shows, which seem to be better each time I see them play. So powerful and energetic. I just don't know how to describe the feeling.

I've never had the opportunity to talk to them in person, I meant to when they were here in Europe, Fall '98, but somehow things didn't work out.

Back in 95, in the springtime, I first got familiar with the internet. I was looking for info on one of my favorite bands at that time, Nirvana. After surfing Nirvana pages for a while I started dreaming of having my own little website and late summer/autumn, still 95, I decided to make one. I didn't have a clue about how to make a site, but I soon got the hang of things, and by Christmas I was pretty much finished and ready to publish, but for some reason my site wasn't published before January 27th, 1996. The site consisted of three different parts, one for each of my favorite bands: Nirvana, Clutch and Chokebore. The Nirvana page was the biggest and also the one I spent most time working on, the Chokebore page was the smallest.

I tried making a fanzine for a while (*Thin As Clouds*), just wanted to try it out, but I'm no writer and there was not much respons from fans so I decided to stop making any more issues after the fourth one was done. I couldn't afford it any longer.

After Chokebore released their fourth album, I think a few months prior to the release actually, France started to fall for their sound. I don't know how or why but in a few months I started hearing from many French fans. There are quite a number of American fans too, but I think there are more French fans at the moment. In 96/97 it seemed to be a lot of German fans, but now there's not that many. I think it's kind of exclusive in the way that there are a few fans from every part of the globe, and no local Chokebore communities if you know what I mean.

Well, I think that's it, can't really think of anything else to say, other than I enjoy reading your concert review of Chokbore's Jabberjaw gig, I thought it was very nice. Take care!

–**Åsmund Vik** (Germany)
Thin as Clouds - asmund@chokebore.com
http://www.chokebore.com/

THe WeB SiTes

these should get you everywhere you need to go:

Thin As Clouds
http://www.chokebore.com/

a european nightmare with wings
http://members.xoom.com/chokebore/

PNMV
http://pnmv.cjb.net/

I've know about them a really really long time actually, but just in the past couple of years really got into them. Unwound had the pleasure of opening up for them in Italy, and that's what sold me. I think Chokebore was the only band on that whole tour I watched from start to finish. –Vern, Unwound, PNMV

THE UNDERGROUND is half somewhat divey restaurant/bar, American music, kicker and disco-lit ceiling, pool table and large screen TV for cheering soccer fans who fill one adjacent room by day. The other half, standard small room with stage. We sit. We drink. We smoke. We wait! I realize as I eventually have to during every trip I take that I have lost my bank card. So, I take the last of my traveler's checks and celebrate by going shopping with Vera, who takes the boy/girl dynamic to a better place. It makes no sense. Sometimes around all boys I become THE girl. Grabbing the attention and turning into überfox. And other times, being more influenced by the environment, I become more like them, more boy.

"You're making boy comments behind my back…no, in front of my back?!" I yell at some point. "I think it's good for a girl to be part boy."

Only Troy nods.

"Otherwise I couldn't go surfing!"

They say I'm boy but with Vera around I hook into her essence and feel almost feminine again. It's nice.

"God bless your

So now at the Koln Underground. The small room which only an hour previous was 1/4 filled for the punk rock comes alive. Packed to the walls, it miraculously metamophasizes into…The Pink Disco! I ask the DJ, Play Tricky! And the night turns on. Vera and I dance and it's sorta innocently erotic. She's buzzed too and it's pure sweat and soul. Hours of it (and yes James, I'll mention here you are the best dancer in the world), 'til most of them are gone I dance alone – even through the jungle boogie, the hip-hop, up to the American remixed oldies. I ask the nice DJ if he has "Hang the DJ", because true Americana, remixed or not, hurts (we conclude he might have been trying to clear the club – then again, perhaps he was being "experimental"). But dancing to acid-beat KEarth is not good for the soul, no matter how out of your mind you are, no matter how good it once was. Anyway, I'm in Europe; I don't want to hear the American '50s, the '60s, news about Clinton. Let it be! I'm in Europe! I paid good money!

And just when I'm thinking, there's no use. All bands are just cover bands. All songs are just cover songs. And the thump of bad-hair day Americana via Germacana is still tormenting. I must apologize for my entire country for influencing you so badly. It's our entire fault that you've gotten to this sorry place. You don't even know, but we can see. You're just a cog in the wheel of emphasizing the block, the stuck in time and place and lack of growth. And you shall not overcome, dang gommit. And I turn back to the good book. But it's getting long and I wonder if Tom Wolfe should have stopped while he was ahead. If he's not just caught up in his own spaced-out word juggle, 'cause he's maybe said it all. But I want to know the conclusion, even though there is none, or even though it's obvious. And then it does become obvious, and his conclusion appears big and bold, page 290, still 1/4 of the book left:

> *"Beyond acid. They have made the trip now, closed the circle, all of them, and they either emerge as Superheroes, closing the door behind them and soaring through the hole in the sapling sky, or just lollygag in the loop-the-loop of the lag. Almost clear! Presque vu! – many good heads have seen it – Paul telling the early Christians: hooking down wine for the Holy Spirit – sooner or later the Blood has got to flood into you for good – Zoroaster telling his followers: you can't keep taking haoma water to see the flames of Vohu Mano – you've got to become the flames, man…it is either make this thing permanent inside of you or forever just climb draggles up into the conning tower every time for one short glimpse of the horizon ::::"*

I am just climbing that same mountain, again and again. Getting to the peak, peeking over the edge, and running down scared but proud of my accomplishments. And then forgetting what I saw, but remembering I liked the climb, liked the view, so I do it again. And I grasp that glimpse, and can't take it with me, because I haven't the capacity to contain it, but neither can I find the energy to stay, like I'm to the last leg of Everest, maybe 50 feet away, but it might as well be miles, and I must turn back for more oxygen, or because I can see the storm and it's *too much.*

Awaken early enough to take a long walk, chancing upon a cemetery never-ending, with long rows and rows of immense monuments that recollect images of drives through rich neighborhoods. Mansions erected for the important man and his family; haunted mossy artistic designs with fresh flowers brightening up impenetrably dense German gloom. Through these rows I walk south and ponder the growing possibility I'll not find my way out. I learn nothing about life or death and the meaning of existence. Once back on the streets, I make a game of peering into cars parked along the road. Observing the German efficiency: 9 out of 10 are immaculate, only an occasional child's toy along the back seat or window to break up the daunting sterility.

Tues., Oct. 6 – Aachen

THE BUNKER

All these cities, the names of computer fonts. This one bold and thick serif – good for headlines. The only thing memorable, besides the building for this actually converted bunker turned club, is the slide outside. We remove the shoes and try to surf it – lite rain. James's feet are already stinking since he's wearing shoes someone left on some stage. Now he goes down and no one stops him at the bottom, so he lands socks in mud. His feet will thereafter smell perpetually worse.

Speaking of which, **James** as cartoon character, cuts his hair tonight, to emphasis his already mod peacock, which they more adequately dub the Frankenmonkey. (He is continually harangued for his new quaff. "Does the whole band have to agree on the hairstyle?" I ask. Troy: "No, but they'll tease you mercilessly." James: "Oh yeah, *they* will.") His dangling bottle-opener glistens – plus the tattoos – his logo. Hunchback, white shirt – James sniffling constantly, wears simply a thin sweatshirt as jacket in this constant cold. And he hulks on stage, looking like a force. Like you want him in your band, and you want him to play the fullback/goalie position in kicker. You want him to back you up. He's light, fun, and a lax but steady backbone…relatively similar to Miik, while Troy and Jon can be more the arty self-centered schizo. Non-stop talk and drunk energy. Nice like having your dad around when you're a kid. I tell him he's like the older brother I never knew I wanted and he says it's because I would *want* him. Joking, with all the right-on comments during all the fragile moments. And his big round face. Now his fat forehead prominent in the Frankenmonkey. You look at his passport picture and laugh out loud even though you don't mean to. And you look at him and it's…comforting. He jabs you and it's supposed to mean he likes you and ow! You're one of the guys. A guy's guy – even though he gets almost feminine as a prissy vegetarian nit-picking about his food. Might as well update the rest of the band's well-strategized appearance: **Miik** with his lost pants is now stuck in beige. He had a stylie baseball cap to drive in but the first odd girl he scammed with (she worked for the German IRS), the one who bit him, demanded it. He was getting more and more uncool. And James jokes his hair is rufus pubes. Miik says he's going to grow it out fro, going to straighten it, and then he just cuts it short. **Jon** with leather jacket always, keeps his shirt buttoned low enough to highlight his heart-surgery scar. It's sexy in a unique way. He wears huge momma glasses – has a innumerable collection: 1st string, 2nd string, 3rd, 4th. When James loses his, Jon gives him third string. First string – which sadly broke – gave me goosebumps. Made Jon look glam Mouseketeer. **Troy**'s got a new 1/2 beard. I guess the guys tell him he looks good in a beard or something (or maybe it's some subconscious form of protection) 'cause when they tour he always ends up with one – fuggin' ugly. People with orange highlights in their hair should not have that growing down their face. You'd think it'd keep the screaming fans at a distance but girl groupies are a wack breed – and I must admit his foxiness does shine through the thing. The rest of the dress, complemented by brown scarf and green down coat, which makes him easy to spot in a crowd, is pretty normal – button-up short sleeve blue and red and accumulating holes (some duct tape here and there to hold it all together). Orange Adidas soccer-looking sneakers. And so on.

Hansastraße

We stay in an old-people hotel, more like a bed and breakfast. The night we arrive, as we're driving into town, Jon sees a sign for Denmark. He suggests we go the next day, and even though James and Jean-Paul were mapping out our route, Jean-Paul concludes our location as 300km away. It would take many extra hours of drive time but we still plan to wake up early and go, knowing full well that it wouldn't happen. But it was good to make a plan, and even I was excited about getting some pot.

We have a sorta late-night party in the hotel room. Miik talks about wanting to live in the forest/mountains/desert. "It's not a hippie thing man. It's not looking at trees and watching a pretty flower grow. It's the space. It's like you can be rich. U got ur tent, ur space, u can be a rich man, without much."

He's been reading too much *Dharma Bums.*

I tell him he has to make a list because basically every time you talk to Miik he's getting excited about or frustrated over all these things he wants to do, or will do once the tour is over. The band ceaselessly mocks that when he gets home all he will end up doing is sitting in front of the TV playing video games.

It becomes a source of much humor, this list. Being on the tour only two weeks limits the scope of it, which I hear grew much and is still growing expeditiously over time. The most important thing on Miik's list, though, was to "make a list." "Troy has a list," he soon discovers admiringly. James observantly replies, "People in prison have a list – of what they are going to do when they get out." Anyway, I tried to give Miik a helping hand by jotting down these To Do's…

Miik's To Do List:

- Get a physical
- Get a motorcycle
- Watch motorcycle videos
- Get a sailboat / 35-foot yacht
- Teach Kenpo (has done it before, is an expert)
- Get the chair (Kassel)
- Make a distortion pedal
- Get a Mexican condo
- Subscribe to *National Geographic*

When I interviewed Miik in Orange County six months before this tour, we ended up talking about taping conversations. It gives a taste of how anything can lead into something for Miik To Do:

M: …Collecting tapes.

D: And then?

M: I don't know, just play them randomly.

D: You know how long it takes to listen through tapes you've recorded?

M: That's what I'm saying, I won't listen to 'em, I'll just tape 'em. Cause you meet a lot of people, some people have very interesting ideas.

D: Yeah, but they don't tell you these ideas – at least not coherently – when the tape recorder's on.

M: I know, that's why I'm going to get the secret one.

D: Yeah, they have them at the Spy store. But you need a small tape player to go with it.

M: I want to buy all that.

D: You can probably make it all a lot cheaper buying it at Radio Shack, I've priced them. 'Cause for the celebrity issue we have to do a lot of stalking. *[Uh, didn't exactly happen –Ed.]*

M: Oh really, that's cool. But anything I try to do like that…I haven't been with the band that long, but any project I try to do always gets messed up, like somebody will steal all my stuff, pictures will get exposed…it never works out.

D: Maybe you're not meant to document.

M: I feel like…well, in a sense it is, because I'm documenting for my mom or brother or people, for me it's like a project, an archive. So maybe it will work this time, because now I want…the tape-recording thing is something I've always wanted to do, I want to have stacks of, like, different…people are funny.

D: I know but the thing is…first of all, it never plays back as funny, but second of all, you have to spend so much time going through these tapes to find those things – you have to relive your life in order to get them. And then you alter your life while you're taping it, because you're taping it, and it fucks it up and you lose a lot of those moments in the act of trying to capture them, because you don't realize it affects you too. The minute you turn the tape player on, you've just changed what's happening.

M: Ah, I see.

D: Now a trick that you can try is if you did it, but didn't have a tape inside. And then you could better look at the process. Like taking pictures with a camera with no film. Then you don't have the burden of it, but you can actually make it a project but you could also tell yourself to remember these things, and the act of turning the tape player on can be the key that signifies "this is a moment I want to remember." And you'll pay more attention.

M: That's a really good idea.

[Opens the micro-cassette recorder.]

D: See, I don't have a tape in here….

(I don't see Miik with a tape player, camera, or given any thought to the matter since this moment in time. I don't see him physically documenting one moment of the tour.)

Tell me the *Spinal Tap* drummer thing?

Jon: "Oh, try not to refer to *Spinal Tap* if possible. Our first drummer was someone from Hawaii, a couple years older then us so he was in punk rock bands before joining our band. **Jonée Kop**, he was a pro skater for Vision, and he was with us awhile. He was a lot different from Troy, James, or me. And he didn't like me very much. By the time we decided we couldn't work together anymore, he was throwing pool balls at me and I was kicking him in chest. When the band went on tour Jonée would drive in his own car, and we'd all go in the van. It was good arrangement."

Troy: James used to practice outside the room. He used to have the bass cord going outside, he'd stand in the hall, 'cause he didn't want to be in the same room as Johnny, and we'd just go through the whole set, two or three hours, and he'd be outside in the damn hall, because he hated him so much. And then there was the day James threw spaghetti at Johnny. Johnny used to sleep in the practice studio with rats and stuff. And he would sleep on his drum set, and he'd have rat traps all over, circling the drum set, so the rats couldn't get to him. He'd have to sleep sitting up because he fucked up his back from skateboarding. Yeah, he was a nut."

The second drummer, **Christian Madrigal** [above], was recommended to them, and he joined the band on a limited basis, agreeing to see how things went. He would write on their next record and tour. There were two reasons for his departing immediately after: Firstly he wanted play more than drums, which wasn't going to work. Secondly touring was bad for his ear because he had tenitis and was losing his hearing. Jon adds, "We knew **Miik** because his old LA band, 747, played with [us] a lot, so we knew he was around. Troy knew him. We tried rehearsing with him before we wrote *Taste For Bitters* 'cause we were sure Christian wanted to leave. And when Miik got back [from Australia] he joined." He adds in the same monotone, "Hopefully he'll stay with us. His hearing is good, and his health is good."

Miik Featherson [left]

Years as Band Member: late '96 – summer '99

Recorded only on *Black Black;* full band version "Days of Nothing"

Lived for some time in Hawaii as well (not during the time the band lived there. He was homeless and slept on the beach.)

D: Okay, now tell me about your drumming style. It's very unique. It almost looks like you're going somewhere else, and you're not.

M: Well, I used to pass out, but I don't do that anymore. I used to pass out and not remember I was playing. I don't know, a lot of people come up to me and say something about that, but seriously I don't know what they're talking about because I've never seen us.

D: And how do you pass out in the middle of a show?

M: No, not usually in the middle, I can usually concentrate a little – usually at the end, I'm like out. But that hasn't happened in a long time.

D: What's going on while it's happening? You drink a lot, is that what happens? You get really into the music and just so into it you're oblivious?

M: Yeah, it's not…I started drinking a little bit before I play because my muscles would get really tight and I noticed when I had a few beers my arm muscles wouldn't tighten up, and then I realized after I played a little bit that it wouldn't do that anyway, but I just feel better that way, but that's not what it is though, it's just listening…

The four-person party is short lived and I'm left with James again, sharing a room. At this period all my isolation compressed and peaked. People say being alone, solitary confinement of varying grades, makes one crazy. That people need to be touched and whatnot. And I was not alone per se and I'm untouched for more extended periods at home for sure, but travel time being of a varying quality than real time perhaps…whatever it was…"Can we cuddle?" There was an awkward pause, acquiescence. I could get sex any day of the year but this sort of touch is hard to come by, particularly under these circumstances. "You need a big arm around you," James's response. I squash alongside, back facing him. He says something eccentric about not touching his feet. Besides them letting me tag along in general, this was the kindest gesture. And it *was* a nice strong arm.

Jean-Paul and I were the only ones to make it to breakfast, with the rabid dog and hated mother show, and a lavish spread that consisted of the typical 20% meat (protein), 20% cheese & butter (fat), 60% bread & sugar (carbs). (Not quite in The Zone.) She tells us we're actually only 3km away from Holland – an easy walk. Despite the exciting news, it takes a long time to get out of the hotel. Everyone else is asleep and the owner couple repeatedly reminds me it's time, calling all the rooms and begging me to talk them down. Still another hour passes. I try to keep outside because the old man just sits by the front door exhausted, faintly mouthing German requests for our departure while the last of us trickle out. Straight to the first small city and some orange-haired buds, a two-for-one super deal – aren't they all.

Most drugs don't interest me and it's easy to stay away, but once in my vicinity…the body gets all itchy and, well then, they best be abused! It takes quite a while for the first joint to be lit. First off crossing the border into Germany – they say once the guards see Krog up front they're usually stopped – Jon has the baggie in his mouth ready to swallow. Once clear, he rolls one to share with James, and I get a couple hits. It's mostly tobacco, though, so weak and kills your lungs. Suspect you're supposed to hit it more like a cigarette but I'm used to bongload style, held in the lungs for as long as humanly possible. What a frustrating scene – and I don't even like the stuff, to make matters worse. But it gets rolling along soon enough. Soon enough there are fatties at all hours – I can't keep up. And it's downhill from here. Pot gets the best of me, damn bitch. Start in on the paranoia and self-indulgence – and those complimentary tubs of Nutella…it's over.

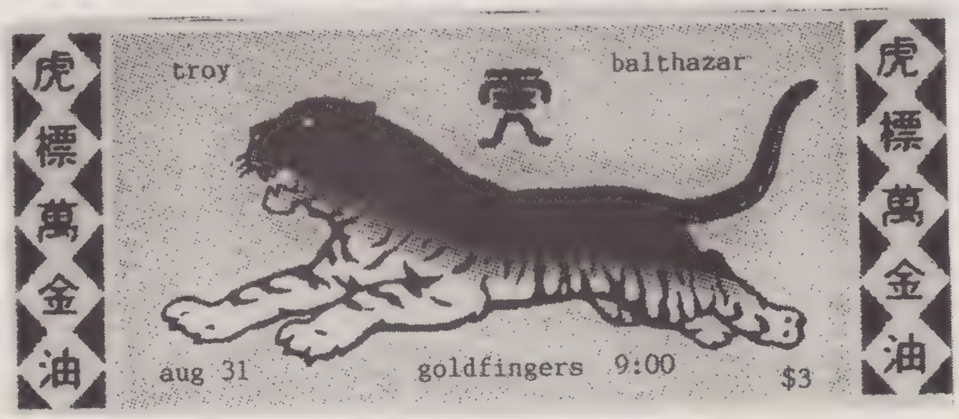
I won't talk about you on the show, if it's not okay with you. But then mommy's going to have to find a new job, and you might not be able to go to Disneyland anymore. –Kathie Lee Gifford to her son Cody

Wed., Oct. 7 – Oberhausen

ZENTRUM ALTENBERG

Industrial haven. Jean-Paul says it's the pizza pie of the worst, most polluted part of Germany. Industrial so they even have an industrial museum right down the way, which too stoned sucked me in with looming metal structures and bright neon words. And I space and start travelling through the area you must pay to enter and it's a history beginning with stones and machines and important men and important papers from the past with old-style handwriting and official seals in wax. Just getting interested I get kicked out.

imagine if we were the freaky funkin' weirdos and we had to turn it out tonite – in our towels and war paint. – jon



We enter an open conceptual space adjoining a restaurant and big concert room, like a huge gymnasium, wood floors. I could have imagined basketball hoops and ropes hanging from the ceilings. Everyone gets comfortable in the band room upstairs, digging into a lush version of the typical spread: deli meat baguette sandwich with butter or mayo, tomato, sometimes lettuce or salad, cheese, paprika chips and the band's favorite peanut butter cheese puffs (ugh!), Bounty (French version of Mounds and much better), other additional candies, biscuits and cookies, more bread and lots of butter (especially in Germany), beer beer beer, Jägermeister, red wine, and fruit (for the früt toss)… Sometimes, though rare, it might just be beer and sandwiches, but this is the most extravagant – everything's included. And every so often someone comes in to add even more on top of it. It's nibbled upon the whole time we wait to play.

Not sure what prompts it, but in the midst of food and joints talk about computers ensues. Any less-redundant seemingly intellectual or philosophical discussion seems like infrequent islands in a sea of…waiting and monotony.

James: "They're all made up of 1s and 0s?"

Jon: "Yeah."

James: "And how does that work?"

Jon: "They're all yes or no questions. The boxes on the screen, they're all asked yes or no questions. Are you black? No. Are you blue? Yes. [Long pause]

James: "We need someone smarter here."

But Jon's what we got. The man with the information. Our de facto Man of Knowledge. Locations, random bits and bites. I sit near him – "on the bus." He's got a nice multifaceted dynamic. He can be quiet and long and asleep or awake at the same time. He can be the one who calmly interrupts a conversation going awry with the correct factoids – dates, locales, specifics. Or he's totally goofball, acting five and making this lopsided smirk which he must have done for some time now, because the wrinkles it makes look set, and the face it creates is of a mature, self-assured psychotic. At the same time that he's Addam's Family weird, he's also the one with whom you're most apt to have a long normal boring conversation.

Vero rolls joints all day. And it's time to start drinking. I must elude the doldrums – time to explore the new city. Trying to be an intelligent and conscious being, I make note of the large smokestack next to the club, planning to use it as the breadcrumbs to find my way back. I consider climbing it but maybe I'm a little buzzed and opt to not. Walking the streets – I can't breathe. Winter coming, colder cold. There is no way to find my way back with that huge chimney, because once it's out of view I look up to see a hundred others have taken its place. To my dismay the city is *all* smokestacks mixed with 30° mist. Damn, lost again! I stumble upon the city's central instead of finding the club. Minus anything American (i.e. McDonald's) that has infiltrated, it's attractive, with the gothic facade to a church making the biggest impression. Night is falling fast. I use the railroad to search my way back, recalling we'd passed the train station at some point.

Back at the ranch…

PMA: Positive Mental Attitude, *or* Piss Motherfucking Assholes

The boys' luck seems about as good as mine. There are six outside. They do a head count – not too difficult.

The band is at their all-high funniest. In their bleakest moment, it's when you know if you can cut the mustard. I say, "This is when you know if a band is really good or not. If they can rock hard under these circumstances." James laughs. Jon says, "Nice try."

"I don't want to be a part of the rock recession," James goes into a tirade.

Germany's getting bad for American bands. Kids spend their money on disco parties. All the club promoters tell us the same things: people only want to hear German bands singing in German. The American alterna-rock revolution is over – at least here it is.

"Powerline booked us in a thousand-seater, they don't expect 100!" Powerline is their new German booker. The Bore is entertaining themselves with comparisons, with this scenario and that of other bands. They talk about Kansas, where they played in the same small club where Quiet Riot played. Quiet Riot, who can still sell out stadiums in Japan. And about how Jesus Lizard was playing 1000-capacity clubs with only 49 paid in attendance. They joke about getting their 49, but it's doubtful they'll even do that. I think they end up with 29, which equals about two per publicity poster.

Despite the lack of audience, Chokebore will still be paid 1000dm (equivalent to $640 American), plus food, drink and shelter. "How do they pay for this?!" is the quandary. Troy is slumped and bundled in his trademark green down jacket, scarf wrapped around the neck and another version of the smirk on his face which relays a good sense of humor about one's self. "Mommy, why don't I have a winter jacket?" is the joke in reference to the club marm; the one Troy keeps saying "sorry" to every time she walks in the room, every time she brings us more of anything, every single time "sorry." "And mommy answers, 'Chokebore' to her freezing son."

The assumption is that this club (like so many others in Europe) must be getting government funding and we debate the pros and cons of government-sponsored arts while trying to ignore the inevitable.

The soundman appears just after the band discusses and agrees they should wait as long as humanly possible before going on stage. "One or two minutes, okay?" "Sure," all the way around. "Sure," with smiles on their faces. The soundman leaves. Troy reiterates, "Thank you sir, may I have another."

The band minus Troy, who gets Vera a beer and fumbles about trying to delay the inevitable, goes to the stage. No sooner do Jon and James leave, have they run back up. They're looking like stunned deer.

Jon: "I had to run back up to talk about how mind-boggling it is. It's freezing cold and no one's out there."

James: "We'll just take 'em on a rocket ride…Troy, you can't kiss her forever. Come on and feel the pain." Troy and Jon put on their coats and scarves. Rock hard!

The Phenomenon that is "Cleaner"

> *No man with eyes can follow me I have been condemned taught by the power that pities me I learned to pity them and I am living a lie. No man with eyes can follow me no one should ever try I am scarred from head to foot I am living a lie. I am a living….*
>
> – *"Cleaner"*, Motionless

If silence could be heard that is what you would hear after the song "Cleaner" is played – regardless of the size of the audience. Nobody says a word. Nary a clap. I've rarely seen anything more awkward in a rock club (unless the band is bombing altogether). Even I can't clap. Nor does Vera. And I turn to her and we laugh. Troy looks one eye over from the stage and even he laughs. He likes the strangeness of it too, and does not cut the song out. Instead he makes certain it's part of every set, the glint in his eye sparkling proudly. And it's really the song, what it does to people – hits deep and paralyzes.

After the show, a tall skin-headed German walks up to me, stuttering: "The music…it's…like you sink down, but there's no ground." He buys two CDs. The soundman buys every album and then tells me they're the best band he's heard in a long time. It's the same at all shows, regardless of the numbers, that the percentage of people who buy their CDs to the total in attendance is, give or

When I see all these guys write all this macho stuff I want to smash their heads. –John Turturro take a night, prevalently high.

Thurs., Oct. 8 – Enger
THE FORUM

The club with the best kicker table. The boys talked about it for days before the show in anticipation. It's called The Forum and every small American band seems to have their name on the dressing-room walls – more so than any club thus far. And like all good things, it's going to be closed down this year.

Behind the club there's a skate ramp or two and behind it a walk/bike path through the small city, beside a stream and thin strip of forest, pastures, meadows, farms, with the occasional gaggle of wild turkey and kids playing hooky, smokin' cigarettes on bantam bridges. I take it almost an hour until an autobahn in sight turns me back, utilizing any alternative route I can without getting shot for trespassing (thoughts of killer guard dogs do not abate). It would have been lovely if I could have just kept going, without any of my things, just said fuck it, this is nice and now let's see where and how far this sweet path takes me. But I ain't no free-wheelin' hippie, and not stupid enough to become one now, in winter Germany.

It's so lazy back at the club; the deadening nothing is too heavy. So I eat another Bounty bar, another slice of cheese, bread and butter why not, a beer, wine, some pot, might as well. It's the epitome of the squelching of my soul. Some people are allergic to milk, you know. My present surroundings are composed of all my mortal foes. Like someone with chronic bronchitis who continues to live in New York when they should be in the desert. Avoidance is the best line of defense, in cases of allergies and indulgence. How can I avoid the state in which I am now living?

James used to be kinda pudgy they say; right now he's worrying about how he's getting fat. About how few grams of fat a day he eats at home, how he only consumes tofu and lite beer. "You're not fat," he tells me, maybe to make himself feel better, "I'm just going to call you Darby Fat." I was nicely sized when I left for this trip (meaning I was strong and could wear all my tight dresses) but I'd gained surely ten pounds in bread alone in just a few weeks. Europe = Fat. Maybe because I'm always poor when I go, which would make one think you'd lose weight, but instead it's a cheap diet heavy in bread, butter and chocolate. Maybe a frite or oily shish kebab or wheel of cheese here and there. How do these people survive? I guess they don't mind being slow. When I return home I check out my blood type in my friend's book *Eat Right 4 Your Type.* This blood type thing is so big over in Japan that, as my friend Leyna will inform me, when they do celebrity interviews it's a more common inquiry then asking one's sign. So I'm O, how 'bout you? And O, see, is the ancient type. THE HUNTER. Can you imagine a stoned Cro-Magnon? Very dangerous. Type Os are: meat eaters with a hardy digestive system, overactive immune system, intolerant to dietary and environmental adaptations, responds best to stress with intense physical activity, requires efficient metabolism to stay lean and energetic. But the most important part, pg. 52: *Type Os don't find dairy products and grains quite as user friendly as do most of the other blood types because their digestive systems still have not adapted to them fully. After all, you don't have to chase down and kill a bowl of wheat or a glass of milk! These foods did not become staples of the human diet until much later in the course of our evolution…The leading factor in weight gain for Type Os is the gluten found in wheat germ and whole wheat products. It acts on your metabolism to create the exact opposite of the state of ketosis. Instead of keeping you lean and in a high-energy state, the gluten lectins inhibit your insulin metabolism, interfering with the efficient use of calories for energy. Eating gluten is like putting the wrong kind of octane in your car. Instead of fueling the engine, it clogs the works.* Baguette anyone? I didn't ask Chokebore their blood types (we'll leave some things a secret), but their astrological signs are as follows: Troy - Pisces; James - Libra; Miik - Scorpio (with Sag); Jon - Aquarius.

"This is a song we wrote, called "Shock the Monkey." We wrote it in the '60s."

The shirt table is in the back of the club and you can catch a glimpse of the band but there's a bar between the two and I drink the vino while Vero keeps me company. She talks psychology and her love for Troy. Being more fresh on the scene she's got more umph to help the sales – the almost 200 made up for last nite. She'll be leaving tomorrow morning but her visit broke Troy out of the catatonic state and it'll carry through at least the next few days I'm still with them.

The boys try to help me come up with a title for this piece: Life O Hateful Life and O My Aching Life are the best two. We drink and smoke with the most notorious Chokebore groupies, who are never refered to as such, but instead are called "The Basketball Girls." They hitchhiked 600km to see the band and weren't even put on the list – but who knew for certain that they would make it. They were going to go home with us I think but opted to sleep in an abandoned building. I only saw two sleeping bags. It was 40° at the very most. We leave Miik at the club to play kicker with the German with the deformed hand. He's working on

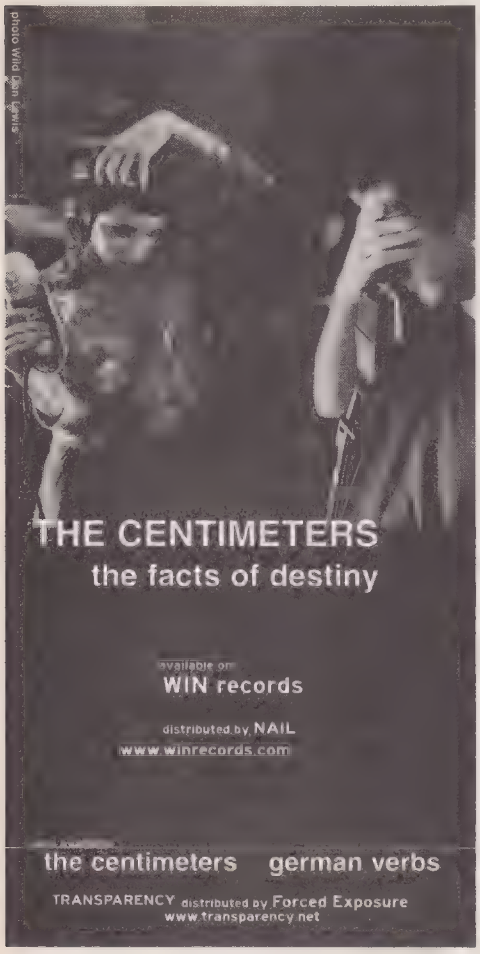


photo Wild Dan Lewis

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To say this book is about me (which is the *main* reason I was uncomfortable – me, me, me, me, me…frightening!) is ridiculous. This book is not about me. –Kate Moss on her book *Kate: The Kate Moss Book*

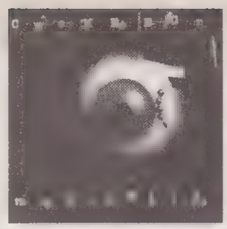
Chokebore discography

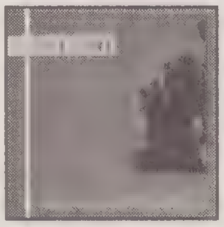
albums
Motionless (Amphetamine Reptile)
Anything Near Water (Amphetamine Reptile)
A Taste For Bitters (Amphetamine Reptile)
Black Black (Boomba Records, PNMV Records)

singles
Circle 7" (Dionysus Records) [as Dana Lynn]
Nobody / Throats to Hit 7" (Amphetamine Reptile)
Thin As Clouds 7" (Amphetamine Reptile)
Popular Modern Themes 7" (Amphetamine Reptile) [split w/ Tocotronic]
It Could Ruin Your Day Ep (Amphetamine Reptile)
Days Of Nothing Ep (Amphetamine Reptile)

compilations
1993 Sampler "Coat", "Abus 35", "One Easy Pieces" (live in Finland)
AmRep Sampler 96/97 "Popular Modern Themes"
AmRep Motors 1995 Models "Cursor"
Clusterfuck '94 "29 Mile Wind" "Now I Crawl" "Throats"
Dope, Guns 'n' Fucking In The Streets vol. 9 "Brittle & Depressing"
Dope, Guns 'n' Fucking In The Streets vol. 8-11 "Brittle & Depressing" "For Proper Stylus Care" "Nylon" [early demo version of Lemonade]
Jabberjaw No. 3 "Narrow"
Jabberjaw No. 5: Good To The Last Drop "Narrow"
Notes From The Underground 2 "Lemonade"
Rock Sound Sampler #2 "Narrow"
Rock Sound Sampler #20 "The Perfect Date" "Taty du Post Rock" "Speed Of Sound" [Chokeboresound studio version]

[note: thanks to the Chokebore web sites (pg 62) for having this info. Check there for correct stats in case I retyped boo-boos cause I'm outputting this baby tomorrow and anyway, they're the experts, I ain't no record collector I'm just a gushing fangirl. You can also find there all videos and bootlegs.]





new techniques for the ongoing Chokebore tournament.

Fri., Oct. 9 – Kassel

ARM (A.K.A. THE CAVE)

When I wake up in morning my first thought is *no breakfast* because I ate too much the night before – so I eat. Second is *no cigarettes* – and then I must smoke one after breakfast. And then *no pot* – so I get stoned. *No sugar* – so I eat chocolate. *No coffee* – so I get espresso. And finally *no alcohol* – so I get drunk. Proud of my discipline? You bet!

Everyone's in a constant state of almost sick. In homeopathic terms this might keep the body in fight mode, but *perpetually* residing in this state makes one exhausted. Too exhausted to fight. Countdown. A sickness postponed and contained for a better moment, which will with certainty come.

We watch *The Godfather II*, blitzed in the van. People arriving for the show can see the TV blaring. Jon gets in: "I just did an interview. I lied about my age. (Smiling) I told him I was 29. And he said, 'Oh, I'm 29 too.'" (There's laughter all the way around.) "I told him I was 29! I never said I was aging gracefully!"

Miik enters the van. "Sorry, it's sold out" he's told. Every seat is taken. "I thought you were going to sit in one chair in the club all night," Jon asks in the form of disclosing Miik's failure to the audience – some cock-eyed challenge sprung out of boredom and Miik's strange idea of accomplishment/competition (even if he's the only one who ends up participating). Like a kid he usually forgets halfway through. Jon chides him, "You didn't have what it took." "Yeah but I just ran back to the van to get my playing gear," Miik's excuse. "I could have sat in that chair until we played. "That's what I'm saying," Jon reiterates, *"You didn't have what it took."* Miik relinquishes, defenses cleverly busted (something Jon not only *likes* to do to him but is very good at), and he sullenly heads back for the club. He tries to get Jon back later, in a kind of simple declarative fashion: "Jon's going bald." But Jon is psychologically prepared: "That's my schtick…it's a shitty schtick…. I didn't ask for it."

We set up the table right next to the stage even though I'm told the t-shirt table is usually outside near the bathrooms. I have less-than-zero interest in sitting in a cold room next to a bathroom all night and the club owners oblige. This "cave" is dark, as caves are apt to be. The Basketball Girls are with me behind the table I've lit up with candles and before long I'm licking their Jägermeister out of the cap. As I'm taking cat licks they're guzzling the bottle, and folks sitting 'round are passing huge Cheech and Chong joints, and to be cordial (as sometimes sharing a smoke is the most efficient token of friendship you can express with others who don't speak your language) I partake of the peace pipe. No words or sign language are thereafter needed.

"I want to come with you!" Happily The Basketball Girls don't turn me down, and finally there's something new to look forward to. Tomorrow I will walk and starve and hitchhike across Germany. They're onto something tonight, and with shy giggles they determine to explain "Quiet Blood." It's something like 'chilling out' but skips the heart and brain and goes straight to the source. This is what I've been looking for, the solution to the tension I wanted to relieve. Some kind of spiritual peace, through the calming effect of…not giving a shit…with a joint and liquor chaser.

But it's a flu that takes over when my defenses are down – not exactly the goal. Under the circumstances – coupled with the fact that one of the Basketball Girls are missing and who knows if they'll even make it to the next show in time – I decide sleeping in the van on the way to the show is about all I'm good for.

Missing Basketball Girl

All the BBall girls came inside last night but at some point for some unknown reason Stephca left (and all this time I had thought she might be the sane one). Drunk, she ended up walking all night in the freezing temperature. Were you cold? I would later ask. "No." We left the other two in front of the apartment and drove off. Left them to find their friend somewhere in the city – it only took them half an hour. "Don't you ever get lost?" We all wondered how they found each other so fast, on foot, in a small but still decently large area without transportation. The older sister replies: "No. We feel it inside," and puts her hands on her belly. James laughs at her (what he'll never understand).

Sat., Oct. 10 – Halle

"This song is called 'Tom Sawyer.'"

You wonder how many people comprehend what he's saying, but many chuckle. I asked Troy for a copy of the lyrics to "I (heart) the Waiting," one of their newest: "I don't even know them yet, I'm still working on that song. I can tell you in a week." They've already been playing it live for a month. The song begins, and though who knows what he was singing then, this is what gets on paper months later:

> *It feels the same as loss of sight I (heart) the*
> *waiting. I live without the normal light I (heart)*
> *the waiting. It's like I swim in sound*
> *and it blankets all my sweetest memories.*

Sick now, real sick. The bartender is a hip asshole, complaining when I ask for hot water I drink just to breathe, just to swallow. Ultimately – but temporarily – I get it out of my throat with a battalion of cures brought on the road for such occasions. Cures I usually think are stupid to lug around: Chinese expectorant/lung cleansing teas, zinc + C lozenges, antioxidants, acupuncture needles, even the tea-tree toothpicks count under these conditions. But I can't dance.

People are endlessly bumping into me as I squash along the stairs where my sorry excuse for a t-shirt table is shared with the mixing board/DJ. I think about smashing people's heads in. The guy behind me…if he touches me again I will kill him.

It's so cold outside – maybe the coldest yet. But you sweat anyway – 90° in this upstairs room, which is used for art exhibits, and perhaps performance events, and now makeshift backstage. We're supposed to be careful not to disturb the delicate displays for tomorrow evening's opening – it's hard to resist. A nice big open space and we all enjoy it in our own ways. Jon and Troy play the big piano in the corner. Miik lies in various states, draped over chairs, flat on the wood floor. Jean-Paul goofs on the lighting system, rhythm to the music. Room's dark now, Jon on piano is artfully illuminated. I lie down and reel in the calm, quiet my blood, until Miik endeavors to teach me some Kenpo moves, a few of the basics in order to kill someone.

Dinner is not served until well after midnight, after the show. It's worth the wait though, as this is the best meal we are given. Most of the members didn't partake, by this point paying more attention to the people visiting them backstage. They pick their girl(friend) of choice – the BBall Girls for now play second fiddle.

It's loud! The owner – one of the clubmen whose flat we're crashing at (in East Germany this is more the custom) – politely requests (more than once) that we not be so noisy. The Basketball Girls have quiet blood but loud mouths and are wasted and giggling madly. I ask James to grab one of them and take her in the room we're sleeping in so as to divide and possibly calm them down. His response: "See, we don't even know them that well. Our relationship with The Basketball Girls is tame." I wasn't sure what he thought I'd meant by taking one in there, but anyway, as far as I could tell – though some wondered about Miik and the younger sister during the drunken evening's mischief in Kassel – no one in the band has made out with a Basketball Girl.*

I talk to James about the extent of their frolicking while on tour. "See," James replies, "at home there's no way that would happen – kissing two girls in one night. On tour it's a whole different thing."

"How long does that fuck your loneliness away?" I 'm

---

* Um, stories do vary and I prefer not to taint my PG image of the thing.

People talk from the heart, the mind, the body. They never talk about the tummy. The tummy tells a lot. –Drew Barrymore curious.

"Maybe a few minutes," he admits. "A day at most."

"Until the next show?"

"Yeah, about that."

I'm desperate for sleep. James threatens to keep me awake: "Lucky we're not in a hotel room, I'd keep you up all night with my yappin'." Really though it's the stink of his socks and shoes that are killing me. I move them outside the door. Eventually The Basketball Girls shut up too and we konk out peacefully.

Last night I interviewed The BBall Girls at the show. They're from Munich. The first time they saw the Bore was a couple years ago and now any time the band plays near Germany the girls are likely to appear, hitchhiking across the country, usually, as in this case, ditching school with a forged note. They've never gotten a lift with the boys, simply hitch and typically get to the next town before them. The Basketball Girls are all really cute: Sophie's the elder at 20, the undesignated leader (who speaks the most English) and older sister of Anne, 19. And then their friend, Stephca, 19 as well. Their method of dance is indescribable. A new-fangled punk rock. Their main consumption is hashish, and they seem to always procure a new bottle and brand of Jägermeister. They don't smoke cigarettes ("Why? They don't do anything.") – instead their tabac of choice is apricot snuff that they snort it in a sort of ritualistic manner. We convince Miik to try. All with arms center, fingers pointed in, we recite some relevant chant. Then sniff sniff. It's more pfeffermint than apricot. Miik howls and queries why he went along with this. "I feel like I just got a Christmas tree shoved up my nose." When The Basketball Girls wake up James says stoke it up and they have already smoked two big joints for "breakfast." It's now I realize that I've never seen them eat. I question them and they say they don't think about it.

Sun., October 11 – Chemnitz

Chemnitz My Love.

it was a lovely day, I suppose not too different from your average cold windy east german autumn day, but since I want your attention I'll pretend their was something special in the air. I guess the task facing me at this point would be to come up with a singular detail which might set this day apart from so many others we've been subjected to, all of us, even if it's not east germany, well lets admit it the former east is a better spot then most for crisp grey air, for dull throbbing blandness, the sum of our daily tasks,

the end. *–jon kroll*

Can't tell whether I'm walking in bad neighborhoods or what. Abandoned apartment buildings mixed with refurbished old. They're both equally creepy. Supposedly Chemnitz – just Southwest of Dresden – was hit pretty hard during WWII and its rebuilding process has been a socialist vs. small business nightmare leaving the city still ununified.

It's a quiet Sunday here, minus busy main road and arty/old folk looking for refinement in the botanical gardens. Besides cultural retreats and gas stations most businesses are closed. There are no kids playing in this suburbia. No rollerbladers – maybe the cobblestones are too cobbley. A tenuous few ride by on bicycles but so rare it makes me nervous. And everyone is placid and calm. I ask a few rebel teens for a smoke and they laugh a lot…but they're the rebels. I should use the Zigharrette machines that appear on the residential street corners like news racks – but have no money. So I sit on a bench to take in the setting – no hellos, just those empty glares. Pained barks from the dogs. It must be hard here in dark Germany; even on the animals, the gloom of the grey transposes itself on their disposition.

The boys had dropped me off who-knows-where and continued on to the hotel while I tried to find my ways and means back to the club without following the direct route. I arrive just as they do, and they're still elated about the fancy lodgings we are provided, including a spa and pool and gym and everything that goes with first class (all the things you want in a hotel but never use). But that might be the only highlight to this icky locale. No personality, the club people want to keep their distance, the whole experience portrays itself soulless.

Jon types a story into my computer [unedited] as I try to talk to each member before our split. It's almost the end of my portion of the tour. A couple of days ago when we were trying to come up with a title, they seemed to finally acknowledge that I was working on an article about them. I never really brought it up since prior to the trip, when I'd already interviewed them, casually, but now towards the end I'm looking for clarification. And they spastically respond, "What article?" – realizing maybe I've seen things, been privy to something secret, that I might not have sense enough to know what to shut up about, and what do they really know about me anyway…. Miik decides not to talk anymore, but drunk he talks a lot, almost as much as James. Miik's not typically self-conscious, more like self-aware, and just to set the record straight he lets it slip: "Don't make me out to be prehistoric, I'm a Renaissance kind of guy."

"We are a band that started playing music in the 1940s, in Guadalajara. God Bless Guadalajara… Thank you."

Troy calls out for people to not be shy. They creep out of the crevices. Suddenly there's an audience. They're still three feet back, besides the photographer Dieter (whose work is featured here). With Frankenstein still on our minds, strangely enough someone heckles in a German accent: "Lightening bolts!" And Troy yells back with the Doctor's knowledge: "Pierce the brain and bring life!" And they start in on their own version of the process.

"Here's a slow song. Perfect evening for a slow song… I say."

Fact of the matter is, the band thinks every evening is the perfect evening for a slow song. And you have to wonder if they're past their prime in some sense, as far as being that hard rockin' band they were. They're indulging in the subtleties now. It's hard to complain, considering many of their best songs are the slow heavy ones. It's hard to not wonder if *this* is their prime.

"If we want to leave you with anything, we want to leave you with a sickening depressing song. Our specialty. Oh, there's one swooping down on us."

It's the only way to leave this place.

Mon., Oct. 12 – Berlin

THE KNAACK

The music of *Brazil* (the movie) is playing as we enter Berlin. I feel like I'm going to be saved, or left lost in a dream.

My character changes with its environment. The plus is I can fit into a multitude of situations more easily. But sometimes if I can't figure out what to be – I just shut down. Mechanical default. Especially at low ebb, when my ego needs to be fed. I'm not particularly physical (i.e. touchy feelie), but not having much close human contact for three weeks is taking its toll. It's ideal toward the breakdown of my self-importance (is that what I wanted?) – I'm sure to achieve some heightened Buddhist state because of it. Regardless of the over-analysis of my fickle personal feelings at every moment in time, these boys were so kind to allow me to intrude (god bless them). But fact was I was glad for it all to end. Or more so, glad for a new stage to begin. If all went well my old friend Leyna Marika P. would be traveling from her new home in Prague to Berlin to meet me. All I can do is hope she finds the club because there is no way for us to contact each other – every number I have leads to individuals who don't speak English and don't know her name. I ask the door people to let in any Asian girl carrying a violin.

A friend from Berlin – who I'd written before the tour that I was coming but didn't really expect to see – shows up. We don't have any room on the list but I fumble that he's taking over selling t-shirts and I have to train him. Oh a sight for sour eyes and sore ears. Because not only is he here, but he has also found a place for Leyna and me to live. A secret agent friend is out of town and we're welcome to his flat. Berlin greets with open arms.

I'm a bad t-shirt girl. I don't want to go downstairs. Instead I try to steal Jägermeister but get caught ("But it's on our rider!"). I find an unopened bottle in the van. I snatch it and become t-shirt girl/bartender, because I won't let it out of my sight. As it's recommended by the BBall Girls as worthy cough syrup, I drink the medicine and ignore every bit of pain as I saturate with cure.

Troy has the fiend face. Wicked little boy with nasty thoughts. He comes to the t-shirt table with the face on, smirks an extra 10% for the Jägermeister. I dose it out.

And it all comes together when the crazy girl with suitcases piled high stumbles towards me. I'm in love. If you want a tale to come with a happy ending just invite Leyna Marika P.

It's a big show because the headliner is some beloved group from merry ol' England. The band dedicated "I (heart) the Waiting" to me. So I'm touched. And the next best part of the night is when Leyna (ex-Geraldine Fibber) whips out her violin after the show and plays virtuoso for Troy and me backstage. And Miik sings "Mack the Knife" in the random karaoke bar that happens to be upstairs.

The best part of Berlin, though, is when for the next week my Kraut friend gallantly tours Leyna and I about the city and complies to our every reasonless whim. A triangle of balance. And we run around with our figs (yes, the fruit) in the air, as if we didn't care. And even those repressed and bitter Krauts had to crack a smile. I don't remember the last time I was so sick, or when I felt so good. But I'm getting off topic…

Before all this loveliness is to occur, we had one more night with the band. Seems our apartment wouldn't be available until tomorrow and I had accounting to take care of. Suddenly we're in a hostel, sharing a room with Jean-Paul, James, Miik (who stumbles in much later), and two of the most obnoxious monstrous amazons. You know, the types that give German women a rep for being huge and brutish. They were pretty, but it was pretty on top of a broad-shouldered, tall, almost mannish body. And on top of all that add loud and boisterous and uncouth – and typically I'm not one to judge. You know when you're exhausted and trying to sleep and you have to listen to people fucking (or *whatever)* and they already make you sick. Any boy's wet dream – these beasts were flashing the room even when it got too old to be exciting anymore. And when they woke us all up in the morning with their piercing shrieks I begged Jean-Paul to shut them up and get them out of the room so I could figure the money because it was then that I had to turn in the thousands of bucks I'd been paranoidly toting around in my bag. I didn't trust these jumbo nymphs and had to cautiously count when I'd rather have spread it all out on the table. But he wouldn't help, preoccupied with ogling Benny Hill-style, until it was time to go and I had to explain to him that he had to wait.

Left with a bad taste in the mouth and a severe hangover, we kissed bye-byes and the boys were off for more. I know it's different for a band because they get to create and release. I suppose I'll never know what touring in a band is really like.

Conclusion:

THE BASKETBALL GIRLS: I never did play basketball with The Basketball Girls but the band eventually spent two days at their house outside Munich. Report back is that they're *good!* – have all the formations down and won every game against the boys ("We played hard, too"). Early morning January 1st I picked up my messages and was ecstatic to hear their sprightly German accents: "Happy New Year!"

TROY: MESSAGE, 1/14/99: "Hi Darby, this is Troy. Um, hi, I just want to let you know something. I need to speak to you about the comment I made on Los Angeles. Just wondering if you might be printing that in the old article thing you might be writing up sooner or later, and I need to clarify a couple of points of interest here. I tried to fax you but I didn't have your fax number. So I need to speak to you about the subject of LA and if I like it or hate it, okay, I have my reasons damn you. Okay give me a call when you can." I get in contact with him immediately for the important update: "I'd like to state now for the record. That I don't necessarily hate LA as a city although I fear it sucks very badly. For me it's good because it keeps me at home where I can write, play on my piano, play my guitar. It's great for those things god damnit." • Troy is helping to build a recording studio in the Valley. A real job? He denies this steadfastly: "I'm learning about schematics and soundproofing. Learning about new digital technology that is to this day untouched by human hands." He's also doing it to kill time. Kill time living in LA.

JAMES: It's been a while since I'd seen James. He spies me on the street while delivering flowers and pulls over to say hi. His hair's going grey, I'd never noticed. And he looks dazed: "She left me. It's over. She's seeing someone else." He and his fiancée never did end up getting married in the Swiss Alps. On top of this he's quit drinking. At press time, when asked about his living situation: "James is currently residing in the Where Is He Now File."

JON: Jon and James move out of James's ex-girlfriend/ex-fiancée's apartment. As if they all don't spend enough time together they move into Miik's small one-bedroom garage apartment. • AT PRESS TIME we find him back at Arlene's (James: "It's nice when your family gets you back, you know. You can always count on your family"), and she gets him a job with a clothing designer. He rides an over-sized bicycle (with bell) around town many miles to get from work to the practice space and back home.

MIIK: Though we talked about it a few times here and there, and I even offered him some space which he could use for a class, Miik never did teach me Kenpo. I suppose it's as much my fault as his. And though this might be completely presumptuous I don't think he has accomplished anything on those TO DO lists – besides making the list, which I guess *I* did, not him. But I have complete confidence in this guy. • AT PRESS TIME Mike has quit the band. The band says it's in order to take care of some of those things on his list. "Mike is studying piano and the harp. He's also learning about solar energy. Or thinking about trying to. I don't know if he's actually doing these things but he sounded really into it over the phone."

CHRISTIAN MADIGRAL: rejoins the group. He was a member early '95 to late '96, recorded on *Taste for Bitters*, and the "Alaska" 7" (even though Miik got the credit – Christian's a little bummed about it still because he considered it his best drumming. "That's what you get for not being around." So just to clear matters up.) He'd been working on his own music in the meantime, Bis Ende (with Gitane Demone of Christian Death), Trillion Stars, backing Raymond Pettibone in a project called Sür Drone, and keyboards in Front BC with members of Saccharine Trust. Regardless, for the one year after quitting the band he's been having regrets. "Any reference to Europe bummed me out. Any time I saw them I would tell them [I wanted to play again]." He still has Tinitus ("It only gets worse, never gets better") and wishes he'd listened to Alex Van Halen. He wears huge inside-the-ear earplugs, as well as gun earmuffs for the harder songs. "Thank god the band is doing really mellow stuff. It helps." Do you like the mellow stuff? "Yeah sure. I like the discipline in it. It's harder to play mellow than playing hard. Any knucklehead can play hard." Luckily he's been listening to Chokebore since so the new music is familiar.

THE BAND: AT PRESS TIME with their largest break from touring since I've known them, Chokebore is utilizing the time, practicing four days a week as much as possible. They've got a double 7" single due out late summer '99 on PIMV (which includes an acoustic version of "Speed of Sound," the full band version of "Days of Nothing," "Valentine," and "You Are the Sunshine of My Life"). *Black Black* will be out in mid-Sept.; at the same time they will be touring to NY for CMJ, playing with a few PIMV bands (which include lowercase, Mocket, Bunny Foot Charm, Long Hind Legs, Unwound). They're 9 to 10 songs into the next album: "Better than *Black Black* – way better." Troy gives that glinty 100% sure-of-himself look. "So we're way ahead of ourselves, at least Stateside. We're thinking about recording in different studios, maybe even some in the US (Last time that occurred was at [ex-Ethyl Meatplow now Polar Bear] Biff Sander's Motive Studios for *Anything Near Water.*) The latest word is that *Black Black* has sold more in Europe than their previous LP sold in both Europe and the US.

DARBY: When I think back on this trip, even two days into the tour seemed like I was already entrenched. Like you take a few steps into quicksand, and all you needed were those simple steps to be immersed up to your elbows; it was to my neck. I'm tough, I think to myself, but once on the battleground – and we all choose our battlegrounds (right?) – my weaknesses are more apparent. Some people look at life like love and some look at it like war. Everything for me is war (love is just not hating for the moment). And in this one you have no real weapons beyond quick wit and good energy. But the sitting kills my soul and the sugar my sense of humor. Defenses become illusions, easily punctured by careless ego. You become victim of circumstance, prey to enemy. Yes, I chose this playing field – naïve and ill-prepared – with a foreign language taunting my bitter-livered tongue. And so, the few weapons must be tested, and the guns mounted and get more ammunition and since you're not playing on your own battlefield *make* it yours.

Once the tour was over I shit 5x's a day for a week and a half. Everyone's repression takes different forms I suppose. What I learned: #1 – I can't sit! #2 – The European diet = not for me. #3 – It's hard to be lite when you're heavy. #4 – You can feel more alone when you're not alone. #5 – Jägermeister is good for your throat. #6 – Jet lag is easier going *to* Europe. #7 – After hearing Chokebore for three weeks straight…I do still love them (and *Anything Near Water* is one of my favorite albums ever). And most important, personally, #8 – I figured out that I continuously get myself lost in order to get my *self* lost. …And this time it almost worked.

* * * * *

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[photo by dieter wuschanski]

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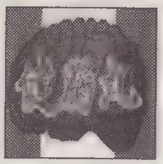

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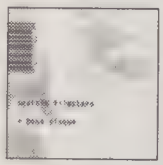

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SPECIAL GUEST SUPERSTAR: HOW TO MAKE FRIENDS AND INFLUENCE PEOPLE

PRINCESS SUPERSTAR

by Chris Lee

Concetta Kirchner meets me at Dunkin' Donuts on Park and 18th during a lunch break from her day job-wearing a brown, slightly disheveled business suit straight out of Faye Dunaway's *Barfly* wardrobe and inch-long fake nails with black and gold tiger stripes. "I'm struggling to type with these amazing talons that are so annoying," she says, "but so glamorous."

During office hours, Kirschner boasts an impressive WPM and well-honed secretarial skills. After work she's better known as Princess Superstar, singing and rapping about the trials and triumphs of making it big on her band's second album, C.E.O. (released by A Big Rich Major Label, of which Kirschner is the founder and CEO).

Featuring rhymes like "I work nine to five like I was Dolly Parton/But I'm makin' suckers wish that they never went to Wharton" and nods to everything from punk to hip-hop to Taco's "Puttin' on the Ritz," C.E.O. is an intelligent spoof of all things corporate, right down to the pie charts that accompany the liner notes.

Kirschner prefers to limit Princess Superstar's live performances to one per month. At a December gig at Brownies, equipment malfunctions prevented the band – Kirschner, DJ Science, guitarist James, bassist Ski Love Ski and drummer Mike Linn – from playing many of their popular songs, but Kirschner's energy and charmingly messy stage presence – complete with stage dives, a transparent rubber dress worn over functioning Christmas lights, and writhing on the dirty bar floor – more than made up for any technical difficulties. "It IS cool to be a wreck," she says, smoothing a wrinkle in her suit.

Day job and concepts aside, Kirschner is a full-time musician and performer, with a substantial following in Canada and plans for a spring tour. A survivor of countless futile meetings with record execs, Kirschner's success has thus far been a natural and satisfying progression from rather low-end beginnings.

"Princess Superstar started as me and my four-track. I didn't have a sampler or anything so I would sit there for hours and play a little sample of a song, pause the tape player, rewind and play the sample again," she says, examining her fingers, perhaps wondering where to place the blame for carpal tunnel syndrome.

One day back in June, we sat around Concetta's East Village lair and talked about celebrities and stardom. Why this woman isn't on *E.T.* every night is still beyond me.

Chris: You went to Marky Mark's birthday party – how was that? Do you know him?

Concetta: No, I don't know him, but Louise, my executive label manager, knew somebody who ran the club. The best part about the whole story is that I made her wear my New Kids on the Block t-shirt. And it's a total chi-chi place – I'm dressed to the nines and Louise is wearing a Marky Mark t-shirt. Genius! We go up to the door and it's a madhouse. Swamped. But she got us in right away, even though she's wearing this shirt. It's so packed, you can't even move. And out of this upstairs VIP section, there's Penny Marshall, and Robert DeNiro's supposed to be there, but we didn't see him. And I was like, "Why is Penny Marshall here?" It was so random. We snuck into the VIP section and we're like, "Cool, we're in, but where is Marky Mark?" And don't you love how you have to call him Marky Mark, not Mark Wahlberg, you call him Marky Mark. Then we see him in the corner of the bar, where they've managed to make yet another VIP section. I'm like, "Give me a fucking break, it's Marky Mark!" So we go over there and we're like, you know, "Let us in!" And I'm really good at getting us into places, like crashing the Grammy parties. But they wouldn't let us in and I tried all my regular tricks which are like, "Marsha, hey! I know, oh my God." You know, like talking to somebody beyond the wall. And, um, it didn't work. So we just snuck. Somebody else was trying to get in on the other side of the corner and we just went around the couches and got in. And there was Marky Mark. Everyone was talking to him and trying to get his attention and we walked right up to him and I said, "Hey Mark, where's the Funky Bunch at?" And he's like, "They're rehearsing."

Did he smile or laugh?

No. Totally dead serious. But we were hysterical. So then we just relaxed and joked and had a beer and stuff, and everyone was looking at Louise's T-shirt and going, "What the fuck?" because everyone was all dressed up really fancy and it was SoHo. After a few more beers I said, [seductively] "Yo Mark, why don't we just get the hell out of here." And he was like, "Yeah, man, alright, where's the party at?" Then he goes, "You know what, wait a minute – we have a hotel room, we're gonna go there. Talk to my man over there, man." And so I went up to this big man and I said, "Yo, Mark told me to ask you where the hotel was." And he just goes, "No." He just shakes his head No. Okay, bye. So we left. [laughs]

Who else have you met recently?

I have a really good story that just happened a couple of days ago at my friend Audrey's karaoke party which used to be at *Spy* and has now moved to Lansky Lounge. I've been going for a while and lots of little stars go, like Moby and Evan Dando. Anyway, we walk in and there is David Lee Roth! And I'm dying. Totally dying! It's the beginning of the evening, so karaoke hadn't started, and I'm so freaking out, I'm like, "Oh my God, he's my idol!" Well, I'm paging through the karaoke book and I find "Just a Gigolo" and I have to do it. Now, everyone's putting in their slips to the guy, so I think, "Okay, I'll have some time to warm up." Well, wouldn't you know, karaoke starts up and they announce, "Princess Superstar: 'Just a Gigolo.'" And I'm like, "Oh my God, I have to do this first?!" And I didn't want to offend him either – I thought it would be funny in the swing of things. So anyway, I get up and I don't remember the lyrics. They give you a prompter thing and I start doing it and everyone starts freaking out. And I look over at David Lee Roth and he's cheering, he's totally going crazy! Now, before I got up to do that we'd put in a slip for him. So when I get off the stage, the announcer goes, "Okay, next up is…Oh. Who's the jokester? David Lee Roth, 'You Light Up My Life.'" Well, David runs up to the stage, tells the guy to put on "Just A Gigolo," and he does it, right after me. And what was so hilarious was that he was totally doing it like a performance!

Did you talk to him afterwards?

Yeah, and he was like, "You were beautiful, you were just beautiful!" And then all his friends – he was with all these young hipster girls – they're all, "Princess Superstar?! We love your stuff!" And he was so nice. Later on in the night he got up and did "California Girls." We were all in heaven.

Now what about the Grammys? I know you met Chaka Khan.

Oh, that was last year.

How did you crash the parties, because don't they have really tight security?

Yeah, well, this was at the Museum of Natural History and it was one of the big ones, like BMG or something. It was amazing. They had the whole red carpet going down the steps and total paparazzi. Again we were all decked to the nines and I was wearing this leopard-print dress. We walk up towards the paparazzi, and it's really funny because every once in a while there's a click, there's a flash, because they're so unsure. Like, "Are they? Okay, I'll just take it." [laughs] It's kind of pathetic, you know, but then they'll look you up and down and then they'll look away and yawn, and you're like "Hey! Take my picture!" [laughs] So what you do to get in is you go up to the door person, you're really confident but you're also really nice. There's a lot of people with clipboards and usually you zero in on the men because the men, you know, are horny. But actually, if you don't have a man there you go for the younger girl. So we go up to the younger girl because the men were busy and I'm like, "Princess Superstar, I'm on the list." And she's looking through this huge long list, and everything's very chaotic because there's thousands of people, and she's like, "I don't see…," And then you drop names. I know lots of industry names from

I can do anything you want me to do as long as I don't have to speak. –supermodel Linda Evangelista (who once bragged that she wouldn't wake up for less than $10,000) just doing my shit, and I say, "Well, you know, so-and-so was supposed to put me on this list." And finally she says, "Oh, forget it, just go in." So we got in and, oh my God, it was a poor person's dream! There were tables as long as my apartment, there was one oyster bar with like 50 kinds of oysters, champagne, girls walking around with flavored Stoli shots, prime rib. But meanwhile I'm wearing this really tight leopard dress and I'm salivating and thinking, "I can't eat but where is my tupperware?" And all these really boring suits are there. So we're like, "Okay, we have to find the VIP room." It's all about finding the VIP room. So we find it and I just did that trick, but instead of "Marsha" I said "Barbara," because most of the people in the industry are Jewish. [laughs] So we're at the velvet rope, and what you do is you give your name first and then you look beyond the door person into the crowd and pretend to talk to someone. You're like, "Oh! Yeah, I know! So I was trying to call you, right." You're so focused, like you're really talking to somebody, like, "I know!" and you laugh and you have all these things and emotions you go through and the doorperson is just looking and they're just like, "Fuck it, just go, just go" because they don't want to deal. And it was actually harder to get back to Marky Mark than it was at the Grammys. Who would know? So we went into the back there and the first person I saw was Chaka Khan. I just decided to do the very straight approach. You know, normally I like to fuck with celebrities, but I was just like, "Chaka, you know, I'm a singer and I just worship you and I think you're amazing!" And she's like, "Thank you, baby – I love your dress!" We didn't want to bother her so we sat down and then in came Sheryl Crow and we're like, whatever, and then what's genius about this is that once you get back – once you have stakes – you can go wherever. Because then we met these people that were all, "We're going to this party, come with us." So we just went to a bunch of parties, we went to like every fucking party. But I'm going to cut now to the current Grammy story, because speaking of trying to get in…and failing miserably. [laughs] We're all decked out, we look great, and we go to the people with the lists, but these people with the lists have headsets, you could tell they totally worked for the record company whereas you could tell the other people, from last year, worked for the museum. So I go in and I'm like, "Princess Superstar, I'm on the list." In walks Lil' Kim and I'm thinking, "OH MY GOD OH MY GOD OH MY GOD." But still, you know, you can't freak out because you're trying to get on the list. Then the next person that walks in is Paula Cole, and she's like the big Grammy winner that night, or…was it Paula Cole? Well whoever won, I always mix up those girls because they all suck. Like Paula Cole…[sings] *"I don't wanna wait..."*

That's Paula Cole.

It is? Okay. Well, there's the other one. Who are all those girls? Jewel, Paula Cole, Meredith Brooks [laughs], the blonde…Joan Osborne. Anyway, everyone's all "Oooh Oooh, clear the path, clear the path!" on their headsets, and I'm like, "Damn it! Damn it!" So then around this time they say, "We don't see you on the list." I'm like, "Oh, really? Well, Nancy Jeffries was supposed to put me on the list." Now, it was an Elektra party and Nancy Jeffries works at Elektra. Four or five years ago she liked this band I was in and she knows my name because I've sent her the new Princess Superstar stuff, but I really don't even know her. So I say, "Nancy Jeffries was supposed to put me on the list." And she's like, "Oh, okay. Paging Nancy, Nancy Jeffries," into her headset! I *ran* out of there, totally humiliated. [laughs] I mean, not only would Nancy Jeffries have been like, "I never said you could be on the list," she'd just be like, "Why are you so lame that you have to use my name?" But then we hooked up with Moby and this guy named Fancy, and Moby of course is on everyone's list, and he took us to the Interscope party. And we went in there and the first person we saw was Bush – Gavin. Eww. And the party was really boring, so my friend Lake starts breakdancing for no reason. And the best part is when Kelsey Grammer, who was the host, was trying to get through, and he couldn't because Lake's fucking breakdancing. And he's got all these bodyguards – they all have to stop and wait and watch her breakdance. Kelsey was like, "What is this?" I told you about Donald Trump, right?

You just told me you met him once.

It was another chi-chi party, invited through a friend of my family's, so I had to be on good behavior and couldn't do anything that interesting. But I walk into this party, I've even forgotten what the hell it was for, and Martha Stewart was there, Ashford & Simpson, Donald Trump, Ivana…and Lady Bunny was DJing! It was the weirdest party! [laughs] And it was in somebody's Fifth Avenue penthouse, like the most insane fucking apartment you've ever seen in your whole life. And I was like, "Okay, the only one I really care about here is Donald Trump." [laughs] So I went up to Donald and I was all chi-chi dressed, and I said, all street, "Yo, Donald, wassup?" And he's like, "Hey," and he shook my hand. He was really confused, like he should have known me but was thinking, "Why is she talking to me like that?" It was too bad I had to be on good behavior.

Have you ever been in trouble for bad behavior?

With celebrities? No. I never got in trouble. I kind of want to. I kind of want to be thrown out of something.

Has anyone treated you with bad behavior?

Yes. In Winnipeg, on my last tour, this white guy in a Wu-Tang shirt kept screaming, "You suck! You suck! You suck!" [laughs] And I get offstage and I'm signing autographs, because that's what one does in Canada, and he kept screaming at me, "You fucking suuuuuck!"

While you're offstage?

Yeah, while I'm offstage too. I was trying to ignore the guy but then I went up to him and I said, "Do you have a fucking problem?" He goes, "You're not keepin' it real!" with the quotes with the fingers, you know. And I'm like, "You know what, I'm not TRYIN' to make it real! I'm trying to do my music, I don't CARE about REPRESENTING!" And he keeps on, "YOU FUCKIN' SUCK!" That was the first time anyone has ever, EVER done that right to my face, like SCREAMING at me the whole time. I was gonna punch him, but I was afraid because I had more shows after that and I didn't want to ruin my face, you know.

So what's your best celebrity story? Who impressed you the most?

Hmmm. Well, I don't really have a very best. They sort of all lump together in greatness.

[Princess photos by Svend Lindbaek]

I'm always really drunk when I meet anyone famous, so I come off as completely retarded.

I know! [laughs] I was retarded when I saw Mike D, at the gym, while listening to him [on headphones].

My favorite was the time I saw Jim Jarmusch buying pants at K-Mart. Have your own goals of wanting to be a celebrity changed after having met people and seeing how this all works?

What I've noticed is they're just people. They happen to have fame, but they're just real people, and most of them do have a sense of humor and they like it if you kind of fuck with them. That's what I've noticed, just in my recent dealings. So if you're trying to get a celebrity's attention, do something funny. By no means am I "famous," but certain people do think I am, and I get these e-mails that are like, "Will you please pass this along, I know nobody's really going to read this." [laughs].

They think it's a whole hierarchical structure to get to you and meanwhile you're reading it at work.

[laughs] Yeah, I'm just like at my day job. And the whole autograph thing, on this past tour I had people, like, shaking, coming up to me and shaking.

How does that make you feel?

Well, first of all it really is touching. I feel like going, "Hey, it's just me, you know. It's just me, don't be afraid." It's really sweet, I love it. But that's me. "Princess Superstar" would be like, "Huh, of course – you bettah shake!" [laughs] There is a huge differentiation between me and Princess Superstar. I don't walk around being like, "Damn, I look good, mmm hmm," you know. But at the same time, there's the sense of humor and THAT'S what really blurs it because [laughs] I have a great sense of humor.

I don't think some people can see the difference.

Oh, I know that they can't. As a matter of fact I've actually had that problem before with men. Because in my songs I'm always braggin' about how "lucky" I am all the time, blah blah, and totally fucking everybody in sight and stuff. Recently I had this date and I was like, "Okay, I'm not going to sleep with you, it's the first date," whatever, and he was like, "But what about Princess Superstar?"

Like "Will Princess Superstar sleep with me?" That would be a bit of a psychosis if you were like, "Princess Superstar did that."

Like Sybil!

* * * * *

For more information on Princess Superstar, write to A Big Rich Major Label, 151 First Avenue, Suite 239, New York, NY 10003. Princess Superstar Website: www.princesssuperstar.com. To get on the Princess Superstar mailing list, send email to: majorcash@aol.com

"People take energy from me, and I want it for pictures." Greta Garbo on why she was a recluse during the height of her fame.

TOILET BOY

(YOU AIN'T KIDDIN')

interview & photo by Lorraine Mahru

WHO IS JOHNNY ROCK'N'ROLL?

So while my friend was hounding the Donnas about who their favorite celebrities are (all four of them listed Vince Neal), I noticed the super tall, super foxy guitarist for the opening band, the Toilet Boys (who rocked), leaning up against a wall. I sidle on over and ask him who his favorite celebrity is. "Theo from the Lunachicks" he answers. As she's my absolute favorite celebrity from my absolute favorite band, we start chatting, and he video tapes me for some Lunachicks documentary he's shooting where I try to be as fan-girl as possible for the camera. He even lets me kiss him goodnight so I could kiss the same lips that've kissed Theo!!! (Wasn't that nice of him? Now if I could only find someone who's made out with Crispin.) He starts telling me all this dirt on all these famous people, so we make plans to do an interview at their show the next night. Though he kinda clammed-up/wussed-out on tape, he's still on my favorite Rockstars list. Oh, and if you're a Howard Stern fan, it's him who always calls up and says his name is Johnny Rock'n'Roll to try and promote his band – he even wrangled his way onto the show and hula-hooped for Stern audiences everywhere via CBS late-night TV.

Who are some of your favorite celebrities?
Theo from the Lunachicks, Kembra from the Voluptuous Horror of Karen Black, Traci Lords, Corey from Nashville Pussy, they're all in my movie. Um who else...

No boys?
Oh yeah, I like boys too... Keith Richards, Iggy Pop, I love that dude, and... I don't know because I haven't gotten to meet those guys, and I can only play favorites with people I've gotten to meet.

So you like 'em better once you meet them, after the fan-barrier's been broken down a bit?
Yeah, I guess it depends on what you consider "celebrities," the word is relative. I mean *you're* a celebrity because you show up lookin' all crazy. You look like one, so you are one in my head, but those are people who I know and they're awesome, and um, Willem Dafoe, a great celebrity, he's in my movie *Hammertrails*.

So talk about *Hammertrails*...
Oh, Steven Baldwin, he's in the movie, and RuPaul... it's about my old band, Blacklight Rainbow, stealin' and sellin' speed.

Cinema Verité?
Yeah, kinda based on a true story, fictionalized though to protect the real story, which I don't wanna talk about yet.

Why'd you start making movies?
'Cause I hadda story I hadta tell. I always wanted to... I'm an artist, like I draw... erotic comics, I have a comic book, and I paint, so that's just the next thing: pictures that move.

Talk about your Internet show.
<Pseudo.com> It's called The Hot Box, it's a live show, uncensored, a talk show kinda like Howard Stern's show, I won't deny that, but it's much more rock and roll and lots more tits and ass because you can show it on the Internet. Basically we just show up and hang out with people. Me and Dick Rocket, also from the Toilet Boys, and Kate from *Rollerderby*.

I never woulda came early to the Donna's last night to see the Toilet Boys except that I read about you in *Rollerderby*. How else has being written up in *Rollerderby* been key to your success?
Rollerderby kicks ass, it's a great zine. There's this whole family of people... like it's some kinda weird rock'n'roll mission, and everybody's doin' it outta love and whatever, and hopefully a buncha money will come out of it and it will be one good big party.

Would you rather be filthy rich or filthy famous?
I don't care, I'd rather do what I wanna do and I'm doin' that, and that's what matters. As far as bein' famous, the stuff I plan on doin', I want everybody to be able to enjoy it, and if that means bein' famous, then fuck yeah, I wanna be as famous as you can get. It all works together like one big circle: you do what you love to do, and if you're good enough, then people pay you to do what you love to do, and then you get rich and are appreciated for what you do, whether you're a writer, artist, or even if you build buildings. Like my Dad workin' construction, everybody respected him and dug him because he was a good guy and he was fuckin' good at what he did.

Are you straying from the topic of celebrity...
Not really... oh, you want like dirt kinda stuff, right, like who fucks good and stuff like that?

Oh no, not necessar... why, would you know that?
Yeah.

[impressed] OK.
Nah, I couldn't talk about that... [starts mumbling, *likes, ums,* and *you knows,* then regains composure] I'm a groupie [giggles].

OK, talk about being a groupie — without naming names, what are some tenets of groupieness?
Being a groupie rules because you get to hang out with people you respect, you get to make 'em have a good time when they're in town and whatnot which is really fuckin' rad, and nowadays there's alotta chicks that rock, so it's kinda cool, I really fuckin' enjoy it. It's funny, 'cause I know from being in a band that when you go somewhere you don't know anybody, it's really nice for people to be open and friendly, and sometimes you've been on the road for awhile and you might need a place to lay down and have somebody rub your back, or cook you something to eat, or just make you feel good, and so from knowing how that is, I try to do that for people... you know what I'm saying... whatever... that's just like a little part of it... or just like really diggin' somebody and telling 'em that, and carrying that over into a pleasure thing.

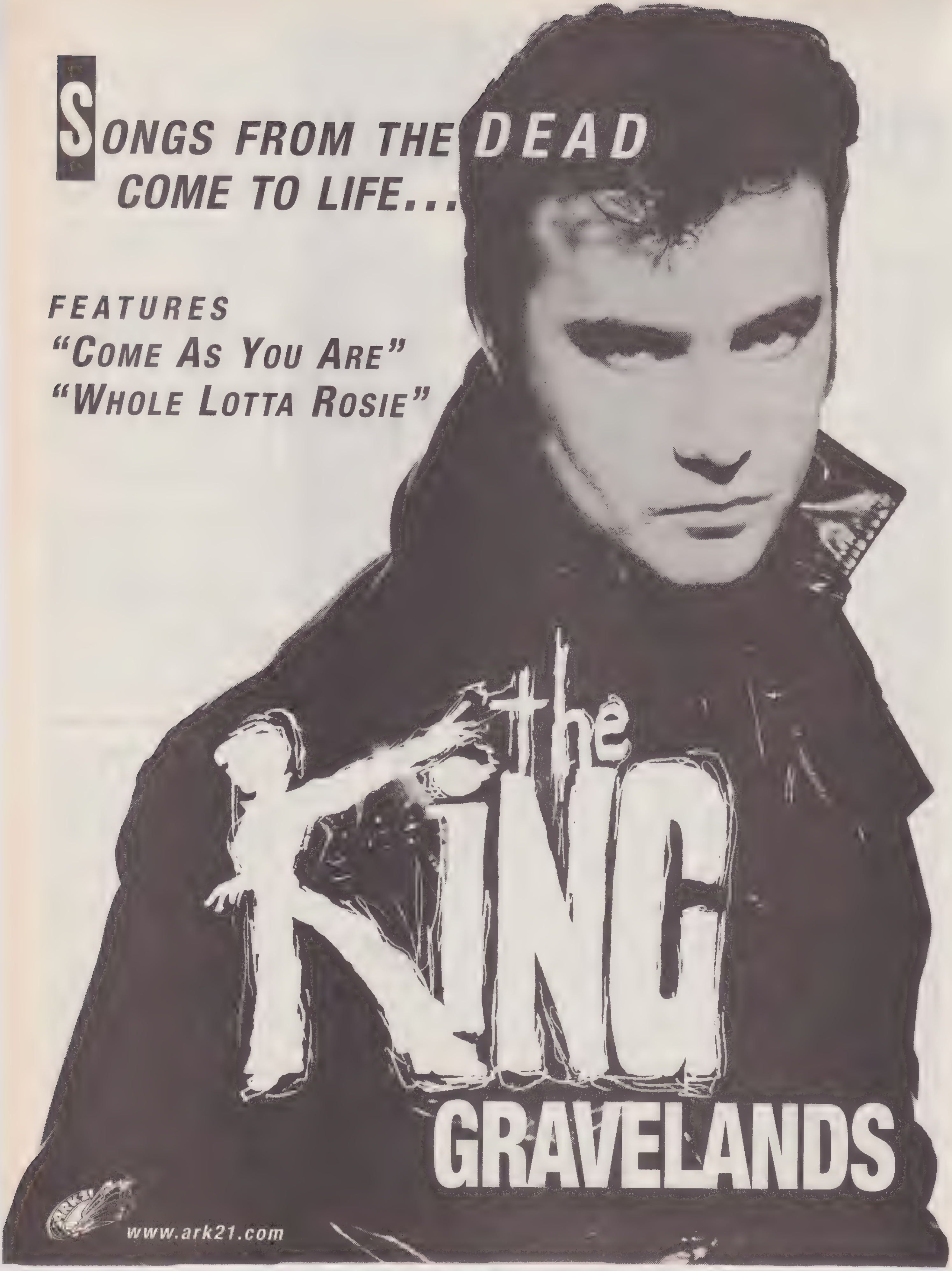
So you appear naked in the "Girlfriends" issue of *Bust*...
Yeah, there's an ad for a magazine that's got a picture of me naked. Actually there was a big controversy over that — they cut my penis out of the frame. It was kinda funny, I had no idea that I was going to be in there at all; some friends of mine called me up and said I wouldn't believe what they turned in for their ad. Richard Kern took those pictures of me for two-hundred bucks when I needed money real bad and then copied them everywhere, on the Internet and everything.

There's some fame for you.
Yeah, we're gonna print off t-shirts so we can make some money off of it too, so you can order your naked Toilet Boy Sean t-shirt through The Hot Box.

Last night you were telling me about celebrity hallucinations...
I used to sell LSD and mushrooms when I was 19, and ended up taking too much at one time and stayed up for three weeks straight, and the radio started talking to me and the television started talkin' to me, heads turning and talking to me, and everything was like Disneyland, and Janis Joplin and Jimi Hendrix were telling me that I was on a mission, and every time the word "baby" came up, it was me, I was this baby who was born at Woodstock, and was meant to cause this rock and roll revolution, that's going to change the way people think throughout the world... I still believe that in my heart, but then I took it too far and ended up blessing people with a toothbrush in my underwear out in the street.

What kind of blessing went with the toothbrush?
I'd be like, "Baby's gonna save it," and I had this whole rock fest going on in my head called Firefest, and now we're actually gonna start a festival called that in New York, it's gonna be huge. Anyway, the cops took me to a nuthouse, and this happened two more times, where I ended up losin' my shit and slipping into that zone, but it was beautiful so I don't regret a thing, but it's kinda weird because I feel like I got to meet all these dead celebrities — the hallucinations were real to me. I thought the nuthouse was the school where they trained you, and there was this big fat lady there who I thought was Janis, and she was crazy — she agreed with my ravings, so for three days before they brought me down, I thought I was in there with Janis Joplin.

Why are you wearing this? I can't see your breasts. –Oliver Stone, to female *US* magazine reporter



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famous names

by Chip Rowe

A while back *George* magazine tracked down people who have politicians' names (a black woman named Pat Buchanan and a social worker/weekend biker named Al Gore). During the NBA finals this year, the *Chicago Tribune* found all these people named Michael Jordan. Finding people with famous people's names is cute, but what about their lives? I mean, I got teased about my name as a kid, but nothing special. If your name is Bill Clinton, wouldn't it get old to have everyone saying, "Like the President?" Would it be weird to read your name in the paper? Would you feel an obligation to vote Democratic?

I sent a questionnaire to 43 people who share famous people's names to ask about their daily trials and tribulations. I got their names out of a CD-ROM phone book. Alas, the only Roseanne Barr in the country other than the comedienne has apparently moved from her stoop in Trinity, Alabama (maybe she died of embarrassment). Bill Clinton of Pahrump, Nevada, has passed away. One Shannon Doherty was actually Shannon Doug, one had moved, and the third ignored me. Two of three Clint Eastwoods left no forwarding addresses. More than one letter to John Lennon, Marcia Brady, Bob Dole, and Dave Letterman came back with the foreboding "No Such Address" cancellation. A Howard Stern in Little Rock, Arkansas, returned his questionnaire but didn't fill it out. Most surveys didn't come back, period. After months of waiting (people with famous people's names can get busy), my mailbox had welcomed seven completed surveys from semi-famous folks (a 16% response rate among people with famous names).

BILL CLINTON

WASHINGTON, INDIANA

Bill sent me a clipping from the January 24, 1996,* Indianapolis Star *headlined "What's in a name? For Hoosier Bill Clinton's, a little mirth." A concrete truck driver, he's among four known Bill Clintons in Indiana and 20 in the United States. He told the* Star*, "I tell people that I'm Bill Clinton and I live in Washington, D.C. — that's Washington in Davies' County. Yes, I live in a white house and I do have a brother named Roger who lives in North Carolina."

How did you get your name?

I have always had the name Bill. It was taken from William. I didn't know about the other guy until [six] years ago.

Do people comment about your name?

When I tell people my name, they don't believe me. But it doesn't annoy me. I tell them I'm the real Bill Clinton and that other guy is an impostor.

Would you change your name?

No, I like my name.

Did you vote for him?

I voted for myself, sure.

When you see your name in the paper, are you tempted to clip the article?

No, there are too many.

GERALD R. FORD

PITTSBURG, CALIFORNIA

MR. FORD WAS THE ONLY ONE OF FIVE GERALD R. FORDS TO RESPOND, WHICH SHOWED GOOD MIDWESTERN VALUES THAT THE FORMER PRESIDENT WOULD APPRECIATE.

How did you get your name?

I was named 20 years before the former president gained national prominence. My mother liked the name Jerry. My middle name is a family name – my paternal grandfather's. But my middle name is Richard, and the former president's is Rudolph.

Do people comment about your name?

I get comments about 70 percent of the time. Most usual is "Mr. President!" I promise them I won't fall down. The teasing is always good-natured and friendly. I respond with whatever wit I have at the time. I'm used to it since from birth I'd gotten comments because of Glen Ford and Henry Ford and everybody's cars.

Do you like your name?

As a child I didn't like Gerald, and as a teen in World War II, 'Jerry' was not a good name to have. But I've grown into it since.

What do you think of your famous counterpart? Did you vote for him?

I believe that Gerald Ford restored dignity to the presidency after the terrible ordeal of the Nixon resignation. I did vote for him. His name made no difference.

Any funny anecdotes you like to tell friends?

When Representative Ford was gaining a national name as the Republican minority whip in 1960, I was a Navy ensign going to school in the Washington, D.C., area. One night when I presented my Diner's Club card to the maitre d' on the way into a nice restaurant I was treated very very well. On the way out I was told, "Come back soon Mr. Congressman."

RONALD MCDONALD

ROLLA, MISSOURI

Mr. McDonald's wife answered his survey, since he and 64 other guys around the country who share his name are probably sick to death of morons like me asking about it. His wife has beautiful cursive handwriting. She signed the survey "Mrs. R.E. McDonald."

How did you get your name?

My husband was not named after anyone. His parents somehow liked the name. He was born in 1934, long before McDonald's was a thought.

Have you ever met your famous counterpart?

We do know a man who played the Ronald McDonald clown for this area.

Do people comment about the name?

All the time. I dread using our credit card, especially outside Rolla, because I know we'll get remarks like "You've got to be kidding!" "Who would name a kid that?" or "How's business?" My husband handles it well, but it is stressful at times.

Do you like your name?

Our friends and family call my husband Ron.

Have you ever been teased about your name?

We used to get phone calls during the night from kids at parties who would ask if they could order some Big Macs. Again, you can laugh at the first few but after a while it is pretty annoying.

Do you eat at McDonald's often?

Never.

Any funny anecdotes you tell friends?

In the early 1980s we were traveling to Louisville, Kentucky, when we stopped for gas. After a credit card was given, we noticed the young attendant with another young man pointing at us. They came over and said, "Are you really Ronald McDonald?" My husband quietly answered, "Sure, I'm the original," and we drove off. Also, my husband is active in a social service club in Rolla and the parents are always bringing their children up to meet Ronald McDonald.

Here's an "unfunny" incident: Our daughter was crowned homecoming queen at her high school in the middle 1970s and when they announced her name, they added that she was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ronald McDonald. There was a loud laughing in part of the crowd and it was an embarrassing moment in an otherwise perfect evening.

I wish parents would think long and hard before they name their children.

DAVID LETTERMAN

CLAYTON, DELAWARE

I forgot to ask Dave if he gets a lot of speeding tickets.

How did you get your name?

When I was born in the 1950s, my parents gave me the name David after the David of the Bible.

Do people comment about your name?

I've heard it all. They have a lot of smart remarks that they think are cute. I always have a snappy comeback.

Would you change your name?

Absolutely not.

Have you ever been teased about your name?

I wouldn't stand for it.

What do you think of your famous counterpart?

I haven't seen him too much, but he is humorous.

Is it weird to hear your name on the news?

No, but my kids get a kick out of it.

Any funny anecdotes that you tell friends?

Not really, but I do find that my name opens doors all over the country when I call people on business. What's not so funny is when people call you at 3 a.m. and ask if you are Dave Letterman, then laugh and hang up before you get a chance to give them a sound cussing.

DAVID LETTERMAN

ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

My second Dave wanted to know about other Daves, so I sent him a list.

How did you get your name?

I was named first.

Have you ever met your famous counterpart?

I've been to the ***Late Show*** once, but we didn't meet.

Do people comment about your name?

Every day. They ask things like, "Do people always comment about your name?" Occasionally I'm asked for a "Top Ten" list or "Who's on the show?" or "You fixed the gap in your teeth" or "I bet you wish you had his money" or "Yeah, right, that's funny, now what's your real name?" I'm in sales so I constantly have to introduce myself.

What do you think of your famous counterpart?

I think Letterman is great. Maybe not as cutting edge as he used to be but still very clever.

When you see your name in the newspaper, are you tempted to clip the articles?

It used to be weird but I don't even notice it anymore.

Any funny anecdotes?

Every day I have funny run-ins. Every day, day after day, year after year. It's kind of bizarre when I think about it.

SEAN PENN

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

There was no one in the national phone directory named Madonna Ciccone.

How did you get your name?

There is no good story for it. The actor was born before me but didn't become a star until *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* came out in 1982. That was when my name became famous. Although I've always gone by Sean, my first name is actually William. People who learn that usually say something about the founder of Pennsylvania.

Do people comment about your name?

Everyone asks how Madonna is. I try to laugh and make the person feel like they are the first person to make that joke. I have been mistaken for the actor twice, both times when I ordered something over the phone.

What do you think of your counterpart?

I enjoy his work. He's a good actor and an excellent director. His body of work is varied and I think it shows great range.

When you see his name in the paper, are you tempted to clip the article?

I save magazines where Sean Penn has appeared on the cover. I have several issues of ***Rolling Stone***.

Any funny anecdotes?

I once called Vaurnet in California to order some sunglasses. When I gave them my name, they said I was already on the mailing list and that my address was in Redondo Beach, California. I had them change it.

* * * * *

Chip Rowe is not named after anyone famous. A version of this ran in issue #13 of his zine **Chip's Closet Cleaner**.

I was very ill and afraid for my sanity but that was before I changed my name. –artist formerly known as Prince

XIOLA

Eulogy for Fame

by jennifer brannon

Xiola is famous in the most bizarre sort of way – for being the dead ex-lover of Perry Farrell. She always wanted fame and made her dreams perfectly clear to everyone. She summed up her future with a flippant remark: "I'm either going to be a famous artist or a famous waitress." Once she scribbled in magic marker all over my door "Goodbye Jenny – We're Gonna Be Stars"; as if she always knew she would be one.

She died of a heroin overdose in June of 1987 and Perry immortalized her on *Ritual de lo Habitual* via sculpture, song and photos. There are also incredible parallels to her death in his movie *Gift**; a whole scene where he could only be talking about Xi, who had just gotten back from Mexico before she died. "Maybe we would have just gotten old and miserable. You were happy in Mexico. You should have stayed there." He continues (and I personally substitute Xiola for Casey here), "Casey and I had a death pact. We'd come to the conclusion that we were very young souls and had never been old. The thought of becoming adults was just depressing. I really feel like I should have died five years ago but I was too prideful to kill myself and go unnoticed in this world. Casey just beat me to it." He reflects on her desire for fame in his spoken-word piece "Letters to Xiola," where he writes:

I remember when you used to call
Remember?
You'd always say,
Oh, we're going to be famous
That's how you'd always end the conversation; an inspirational message.

I wonder sometimes if these creations were born from love or guilt. I hate Perry Farrell for making my friend famous for nothing else but being a junkie, but I also want to sit down with him and cry and laugh and remember her and share stories and pictures and letters. There's a rumor on the Internet that Xiola isn't a real person, but that she's a code name for heroin. That makes me so crazy, to see this incredible girl reduced to nothing but her demise. Someone in Perry's position could have made her famous for all the things she wanted to be famous for. He could have taken her art and turned it into the most beautiful eulogy ever. He could've made all of her dreams come true. I feel like I have to defend her honor, but at the same time I'm not really sure if she'd want me to. I wonder if somehow she could see her image plastered on the cover with her name inside an album that sold millions of copies; if she'd feel complete. Would that be enough for her – to be a sort of cult figure? She could have the biggest smile on her face – sitting up there knowing that she left people wondering. But she had dreams of her own. She wouldn't be happy riding on someone's coat tails.

I heard many years ago from a member of Fishbone, another L.A. band Xiola was friendly with, that Perry was the one who first introduced Xi to heroin – at her urging. She couldn't have been more than 14. He had to have been at least 10 years older than her. If that's true, what could he have been thinking? If heroin was his own hell why would he bring someone he loved into it? And if someone's dead and can't defend themselves, don't you have a responsibility to explain things a little more clearly? I try to interject reason into it, but what kind of responsibility can you expect out of a junkie?

There's no doubt that she would have been famous had she lived, and I can't find any peace in him "making her dreams come true" when she should have had the chance to do that herself. Xiola was so young when she dated Perry. They fed off each other's energy and creativity. They even looked alike. Their hair was the same, they moved and danced in the same ways. I can imagine how they were together and the delight, energy and intrigue they shared. Xiola loved him so much. I remember how ecstatic she was when she got off the phone after he told her he had written a song about her ("Xiola" by Psi Com). She totally got off on that stuff.

Life was a big dance party to Xiola and the littlest thing could be fun – when she was clean. When she was clean she was a princess. Her makeup was impeccable. She'd take two hours to get ready to go anywhere and wouldn't go until you told her she looked beautiful. When she wasn't clean she'd stay locked in the bathroom with her makeup running down her face as she tried to make herself feel beautiful in other ways.

Sometimes when I'm trying to make a decision her voice will pop into my head. Years ago I was trying to decide whether or not to break up with a boyfriend and I heard her ask me, "Does he have a big dick?" When I telepathically answered, she replied, "Are you stupid, you can't dump him if he has a big dick." I laughed out loud and hung on to the relationship for a little while longer. I have no idea why that would pop into my head if her energy wasn't around somewhere. I miss her so much. I was talking to her mother today about the things we missed and her mother said the most special thing. She said, "I miss walking around with her holding hands and looking at things through her eyes. She thought everything was beautiful."

I wonder sometimes if I should be happy that Perry made Xi famous. It is what she wanted. I wish he could have done it in a way that showed her life rather than her death, but then again it would be wrong to pretend that her drug problem didn't exist. In "Letters to Xiola" he writes, "Maybe I should try scrubbing up Bernice." Maybe that's exactly what he was doing to Xiola (symbolically) in *Gift* when he "scrubbed" Casey up after she O.D.'d.

When the cops come and question him about what he's done to Casey's body, he says, "I just wanted to clean her up. I wanted to remember her. It's hard to explain this to you. Can you understand?" The cops respond, "No, we can't understand. For all we know you could have murdered her and right now you are the prime suspect."

I feel like those cops. I understand that's how he wanted to remember her, but I can't decide if I hold Perry responsible for my dear friend's death in some warped way or if I should be kissing his feet for doing for her in death what she didn't have the time to do in life.

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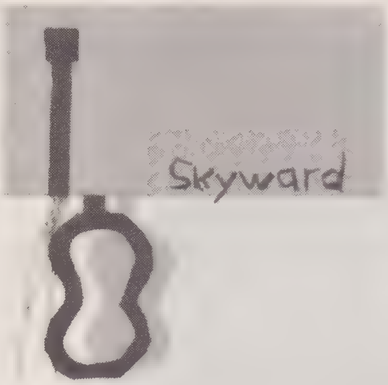
* *Gift* was made approximately five years after Xiola's death

You don't get to chose what you get famous for and you don't get to control which of your life's many struggles gets to stand for you. –Erica Jong



The lightbulb tattoo atop Joe Skyward's head must be glowing brightly right about now. Skyward, formerly the bassist for Sky Cries Mary and the Posies, is the mastermind behind the record Skyward, a labor of love heralding the existence of Skyward, the collective. The CD is full of interest from the outset, from the unusual and appealing music to the people involved in its creation. Not only does it feature dozens of musicians from acclaimed bands (such as the Geraldine Fibbers, 7 Year Bitch, the Billy Tipton Memorial Saxophone Quartet), but it's also heavy on the family tip. His son Jaxin reads his homework lines like a champ on one song, and his 14-year-old daughter, Brette Howard, contributes her tender vocals to much of the rest. What's particularly interesting (in a good way) about Howard's voice is that even when she's singing adult lyrics ("It always seems you gave me gratified replies" leaps to mind), she sounds like a 14-year-old. A talented teen to be sure, but not one who's seen everything already. While Skyward masterfully plays guitar, bass, organ, and other instruments, and handles much of the songwriting, he's also assembled a top-notch supporting crew. The results are eclectic—alt-pop, funk, prog rock, acid jazz, country, and then some, sometimes all in the same song. "Such a Small Room," starts out languid, speeds up momentarily, then slows down again, with Joe and Brette trading off vocal duties. Brette's high, soft voice is the perfect complement to Joe's effects-enhanced mellowness. Brette really proves her mettle on "Sundial," which starts out almost as a dirge, with a languorous cello setting the mood, but the heaviness is tempered by Brette's sunny voice. Like a young Kate Bush, she really experiments with her singing on this one, at times taking nary a breath, to amazing effect. Then there are the guest singers. "Position Fatal," featuring Aimee Page on vocals, is a showstopper—melodic, weary, and haunting. Roderick Romero of Sky Cries Mary lends his words and voice to the Eastern-flavored "Pay to Pray." His ghostly vocals work well with the exotic instruments involved, and the words in typical Roderick fashion, take a while to sink in, but beware when they do. The spoken-word piece by Helen Stout elicits a confounded "Whew!"; this strangely hypnotic number is definitely not a typical rock offering. Then again, that could be said of the whole disc. The breezy, tripped-out extended jam of the final song,"Taxi de L'espace," finishes, and suddenly it's over…and it'd be a shame to let it end like this. Though originally conceived as a "one time only" deal, here's hoping there's more Skyward to come.

–Kathy Mar

SEATTLEWEEKLY
May 21, 1998

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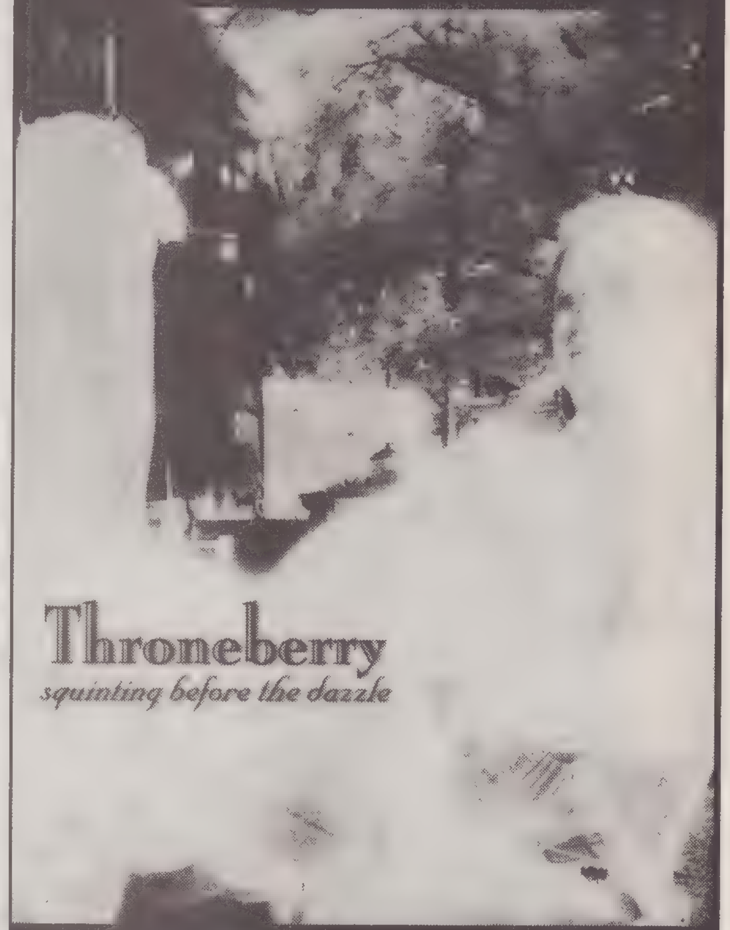

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GUIDE TO BEING A **CELEBRITY STALKER**

BY MATT WORLEY

Have you ever wondered what it is like to be next to a celebrity? To be treated like a human being by people who are demi-gods? Maybe you've thought of having sex with someone on MTV or in the movies? C'mon, sure you have. Those fleeting thoughts that run through your head as you watch Mariah Carey swing in her oh-so-conveniently-placed-by-the-lake tree swing. And you've been to a concert, right? Haven't you always wanted to be the person that Bruce Springsteen pulls up on stage (then you can be on a couple of hit sitcoms, and a movie with Jim Carrey), or the one Jon Bon Jovi is pointing to when he sings "I'll be there for you!" It's everyone's dream, but what are you doing about it? Are you even close to taking the steps to make your dream a reality? Well, we here at **Ben Is Dead** ***are going to show you the simple steps you must take to become a celebrity stalker.***

1. BE SELECTIVE

You can't lust after every beautiful famous person. There has to be a selection process involved. You should pick someone you feel a personal connection to. Remember that you want to make an impression, so it might be necessary to discard hopes of stalking huge stars (Madonna, Eddie Vedder, and David Letterman all have numerous stalkers – try to be original.). Pick a supporting player on your favorite sit-com (it doesn't have to be a hit show – just one that you like), or maybe the drummer of your favorite band (drummers hardly ever have admirers of any kind – besides other drummers). It only matters that they are famous (which means being on TV, in a movie or in a band with a recording contract* – local bands don't count, that would just make you a creepy groupie), because the fact that they are famous will make you well known. Oh yeah, novelists and writers are not celebrities (thus they should not be stalked) – nobody reads anymore. Remember, you can only be truly dedicated to one famous person. Nobody likes wishy-washy stalkers.

2. FIND OUT WHERE THEY LIVE

This might be a relatively simple process. Many people, companies and magazines sell addresses of famous people (or their agents) for nominal amounts (remember, this is your life's work, so don't be stingy with the buckage). If you can't find a personal address, there is always the time-honored tradition of writing companies that pay famous people (TV & movie studios, networks, record companies, etc.), but everyone knows the letters sent to those places are thrown away by jealous mailroom nerds. Another, more time-consuming, and possibly dangerous way of finding out would be to go door to door in the Los Angeles Metropolitan Area and ask if anyone famous lives at each residence. There are also large concentrations in New York City, Santa Fe, and the state of Montana.

3. WRITE A PERSONAL LETTER OUTLINING WHY YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE A PART OF YOUR CHOSEN CELEBRITY'S LIFE

This should be as detailed and meticulous as possible. Tell about the first time they made you quiver with anticipation. Tell them about the bed-wetting problem you had until you were seven. Tell them about the dog that died, and the cat that is still living. Tell them that you love them and would do anything to be close to them. Send provocative articles of clothing along with the letter – that's how Luke Perry chose a wife! Get as close as you can to actually touching them, but remember, it's a letter, so use good grammar. Bad spelling and sentence construction is the kind of thing that could come back to haunt you.

4. TRY TO VISIT THEM UNINVITED

This is pretty self-explanatory. The point is to surprise them. So much of a celebrity's life is planned out and written down. They will appreciate it. Celebrities love surprises!

5. TAKE REBUFFS VERY PERSONALLY

Remember, you're a person too. Just because they're making a lot of money and are in the news or on TV all the time doesn't mean they're more important than you or your feelings. You love them, they should realize and accept that. There is no reason for a celebrity to throw you in jail.** Complain to everyone who will listen, including grocery-store rumor rags, your friends, and *Extra*. Make that celebrity realize what a bad decision it was to say no to your advances.

6. IF THEY WON'T LET YOU BE THEIR LOVER OR FRIEND, TRY TO KILL THEM

How dare they cast you aside purely because they have no idea who you are. If you were a celebrity like them, they'd love having you around. You could probably sleep with them if they liked you enough. But no! They don't want you around at all, so the only thing left to do is replace their life with yours. Everyone will realize when you kill them that you should have been famous instead. Everyone will thank you for saving the world from another pretentious and phony celebrity. You will be hailed as the savior of humankind. You will be famous.***

7. THINGS TO THINK ABOUT BEFORE STARTING YOUR QUEST

a) Threatening to kill the President is a federal crime, thus it is really hard to stalk him. The Secret Service is very tough about this. And realize that anyone who is obsessed with the President is not thought of as a legitimate stalker – they are considered an idiot. Please stay away from the President, he's a public servant and only makes $200,000 a year. **b)** Many times even the best stalkers get ignored by everyone. When this happens, the only way to make headlines is to kill yourself. While this would deprive you of seeing the flower of your germination, just think of the big picture *Rolling Stone* will run of you when you're dead. **c)** There is not much money in stalking. You should probably have a job of some kind on the side. **d)** Many stalkers have very little sex, but then neither do a lot of married people, I hear. **e)** A lot of them are just fucking bonkers, too – the stalkers. Maybe the married people, as well. **f)** Oh yeah, you didn't read this here. Tell people you had a message from God or something. Or aliens, yeah, that would work. Or, better yet, blame the music you listen to a lot. Or MTV. Wait a minute, blame *60 Minutes*. Nobody *ever* blames *60 Minutes*.

---

* For celebrities of the musical persuasion, go to every concert played by your celebrity's band as you can. Get good seats, and after the show, try to get backstage. Blow jobs usually work on bouncers, but many do frown upon getting head from other men. If you are male, please be ready with the wallet instead of your mouth. When backstage, remember that many people want to get close to your chosen celebrity, so be careful not to let better-looking people near once you've got your celebrity cornered. If you've gotten to this stage, you can probably skip the next section, although it's always good to know all of the steps.

** Well, if you try to hurt them or trespass onto their property, or break a law of some kind, that would be a reason to throw you in jail. But if they really loved you they would cover it up and let you go without pressing charges.

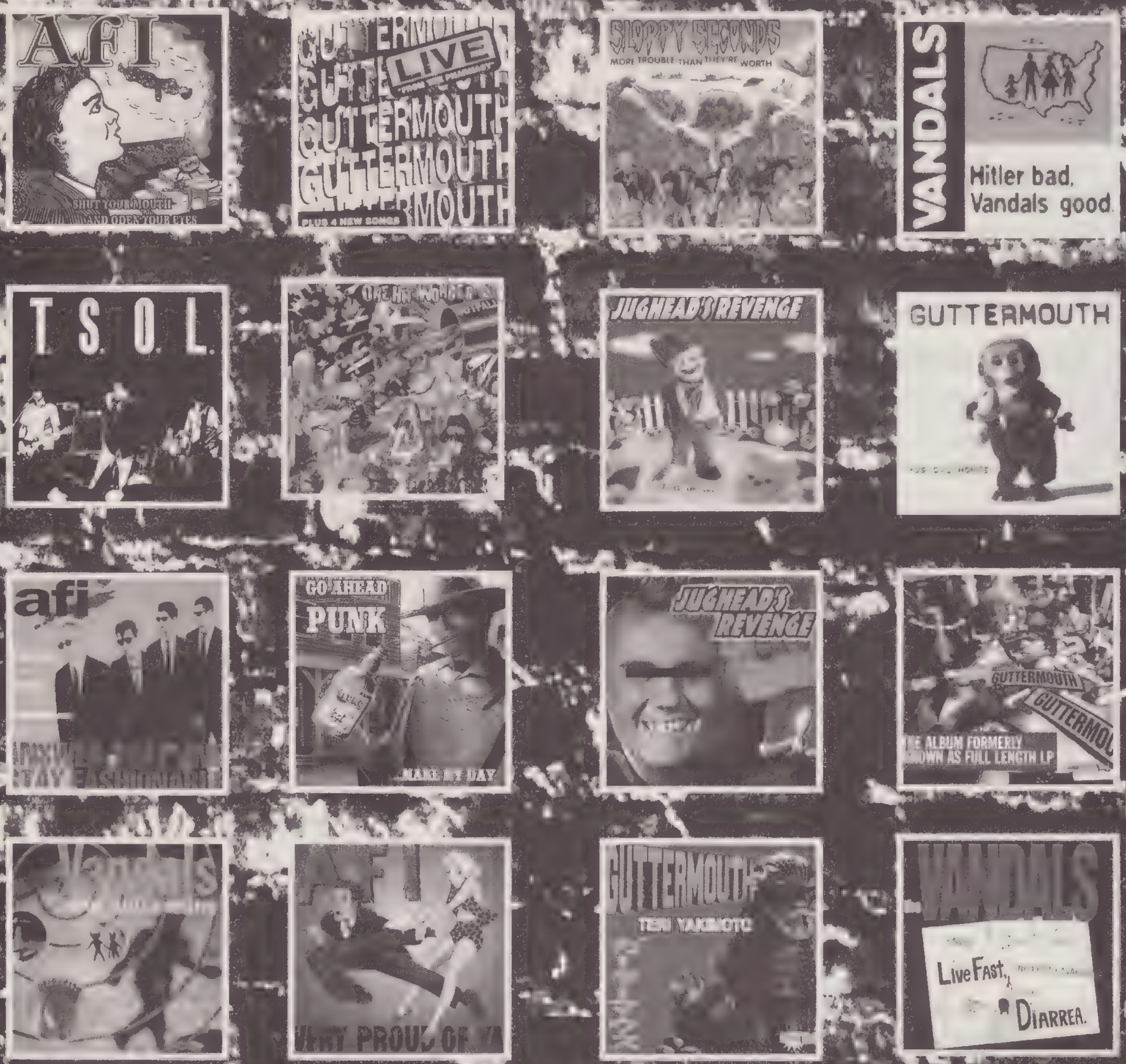
*** In many states, murder is illegal. Please consult local mandates before proceeding with this step.

* * * * *

Matt Worley used to create Lies Magazine *which is now defunct. Hmm, that's all I really know about him 'cept that he's funny.*

A celebrity is one who works all his life to become well-known and then goes through back streets wearing dark glasses so he won't be recognized. –Jane Powell

More Chaos For Your Buck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Snails and Retards* and Crispin Glover

by Lorraine Mahru

photo by Lorraine Mahru

The disillusionment that comes after being an adolescent rock-star groupie-wannabe will pretty much cure you of Celebrity Worship later in life. *Not to say that I don't like spotting Sarah Michelle Gellar on Melrose as much as the next Buffy fan, but that's pretty much as far as it goes. The reality is that the personas these actors portray in our favorite movies/TV shows/videos/whatever are JUST AN ACT. Buffy cannot really slay a demon ten times her size with a pointed stick and a witty comeback. But then there's Crispin Glover. Let's put aside for a moment the fact that he's been number one on my Cute Boy List for about a decade and just state what an amazing actor the man is. The way he pulls off all those wacked-out crazy deviant maladjusted misunderstood outcast roles with genuine angst. Now there's a man who I could really sink my teeth into stalking, but wait, WAIT, he's just an ACTOR, that's not the real him. Or is it? Living in Los Angeles, the smack-dab aorta of the celebrity machine pedestal manufacturing plant, one hears rumors, as we apparently have nothing better to talk about over overpriced tofu entrees. I started to hear (OK, I'd ask anyone who might have encountered his neighbor's cousin's redheaded stepchild's dog who knew someone who knew someone's boyfriend who worked for a day on a movie set with him) tales that with Crispin, IT WASN'T JUST AN ACT! Then a couple of years ago, Darby dragged me to some health food grocery store with a snack bar inside for an overpriced dinner. I was huffily dawdling, looking for something that didn't have tofu in it (being a confection-addled anti-health food sugar junky, this wouldn't have been my restaurant of choice). So we're trudging back to the car, and there's this guy walking towards the entrance. I'm thinking, "He's cute." As he gets closer it was, "Wow, he's really cute, kinda looks like Crispin Glover." As he passes us, I frantically start elbowing Darby in the ribs while sputtering, "Ohmygod! It's him! It's Crispin Glover. That was HIM!" "Well, go get him girl," says Darby calmly. I grab some back issues outta her trunk and race back inside while she sits in the car munching her seaweed salad. I try not to run up and down the aisles, then finally spot him. With a visibly trembling hand, I hand him the magazines while blurting out, "Can I interview you?" When the Celebrity Issue was still in the planning stages, I'd told Darby he was the only one I wanted to interview (and why work at a magazine if you can't use it to your advantage?). He was very nice about it, said he already had one of the issues at home, and he would be interested in doing something as it would time with the release of the movie that he wrote and directed,* What Is It? *So a few months later after the Comix Issue was done, I sent a big package to him with more back issues, a t-shirt, some photos I'd taken, and a letter asking if he really wanted to be interviewed, or was he only being nice to assuage the insane supermarket fangirl with a crazed look in her eye because he feared impending physical harm? So months of e-mailing ensued. As ecstatic as I was to be actually corresponding with Crispin Glover – a few phone calls even – things weren't going well. He had all these demands, like only doing it if he could be on the cover (Vincent Gallo anyone?) and others that I would have been happy to acquiesce to, but it's Darby's magazine, and even I in my love-addled state could see how she might not want to take orders from Mr. Who-does-he-think-he-is anyway. He seemed so nervous all the time, as he'd been jacked by the press in the past, he was understandably leery, to the point of guarding every word out of his mouth. I realized I was getting nowhere, and suggested doing an email interview. Darby wasn't thrilled with the idea as she likes it when people are on the spot, but Crispin obviously wasn't gonna play, and it would've only resulted in a guarded interview that just wouldn't be any good. He brightened at this plan considerably and even stopped stuttering in phone conversations from then on. When we went to his ivy-covered mansion to view a test-edit of his movie, he was so charming that even Darby was won over.*

Let's start off with *Mr. Density*... what were your reactions upon learning that there was a fanzine dedicated to you and your characters?

I was glad.

chalk it up to good acting, but people really think that you are Reuben Farr or Jingle Dell or Howdy Cleveland; is it correct to assume that these roles provide insight into your character, or should they be taken merely as face-value interpretations?

I have interpreted these roles, but hopefully there is a reflection of my own self within what I have put forth in media.

What's the best thing about being a celebrity?

It makes it easier to meet females. Sometimes people give you special treatment in a good way.

What made you want to be an actor in the first place?

I started wanting to be an actor when I was about eleven. I knew it was something I would be able to do. I suppose I also knew it would be good to help meet females at some point.

So I've heard that you've actually turned down movie roles because the characters were too wack-o, because you don't want to be pigeonholed as the type of character actor who can only play eccentrics; why don't you want that image? you don't think it's already too late for that; especially once your movie's released?

No. I do not know where you got that idea. I would never turn down a character because it was too "wack-o" I would only turn a character down if it was not interesting. I do not concern myself with range so much in terms of worrying that people would think I could only play eccentrics. In fact what people call "stereotyping" or "pigeonholing" are the bad words for something that an actor should strive for to a certain extent. At a certain point in an actor's career it is good to say to oneself "What am I?" and then figure something out. This entity should probably be simple. You could call this entity an archetype as opposed to a stereotype. I mean all this in terms of an entity that an actor can communicate, and is absolutely true to one's psyche. I believe this conclusion of self is a good thing to stick with, and explore the entire universe from this point of view. This does not limit one, but expand. It is only good if one can get some kind of truth from within this point of view. If it is a false ideal, then it will become a "stereotype" as opposed to an archetype. It also is not good if the bribery of the business starts to take one away from this individual point of view in order to help corporate entities or corporate lackeys do things that go against what genuinely interests one simply so one can accumulate more money. I do believe though at the beginning of an actor's career they should do whatever is necessary to get started. I also believe that this early sense of self ideal can change and become more complex or simpler, but that it's best if it comes from within as opposed to, like I said, bribery. As far as the movie being released and affecting what people will perceive of me; certainly *What is it?* goes further into my psyche than any film I have ever done. And what people will perceive of me from the film... well that will be fine.

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*please note, they are NOT retards, they have Down Syndrome!

FUJI RMS
RMS 4
RMS 5
photo by Lorraine Mahru

You also have issues with the film industry in general... what you were saying that time about corporate filmmaking and no counter-cultural films today as opposed to the '60s; and how taking small roles in big budget has more integrity...

I can bring up issues with the idea of culture in general, but I should stick more to film. The film industry, or more specifically the media industry, *is* our culture to a large extent now. It is said that media reflects the culture, but really the culture reflects what is put forth in the media. I am extremely interested in the Hero's Journey story structure as related by Joseph Campbell in *Hero With a Thousand Faces.* I think it is self evident that story structure/religion was invented to convince the masses of morals. These morals passed down in stories through the ages are generally the culture's – or the heads of the culture's – idea of what is "good" for that culture. "Good" is of course a subjective word. The archetype patterns of the Hero's Journey story structure help to prove what the author's point of view of, or on, "good" or "bad" is. Viewing current films has become less of an entertainment, and more a pastiche of what is gleaned that the various corporations behind the films seem to want to make the culture think is "good" or "bad." For the most part, I do not agree with the corporate ideals of what I or anyone should think on any level. I see a lot of films. Most of the time now I see old films, generally the older the better. Sixty-seventy-eighty- or ninety-year-old films are often best. Why? Because at least when I am seeing a film close to one hundred years old I am viewing a point of view or a moral from a dead culture. "Dead culture" means the value system behind the film is no longer necessarily in effect. If I like the moral of the old film, I can enjoy it immensely, but if I do not like the moral, afterwards I can say "Well, I see how that was accepted at that time." That does not bother me like a moral I do not agree with of a current movie. When I see a moral I do not like in a contemporary film and no one seems to notice how awful the moral is, I feel like I am walking amongst zombies believing what is placed before them on their "media plate" is "good." Also, sometimes in very old films the moral values are quite different from this culture's current moral values, and I can enjoy those as a breath of fresh air.

As far as current films/media reflecting the ideals of "counter-culture" from a very young age I have liked art: painting, writing, photography, music, film and all arts throughout all history or prehistory. I have noticed that often times, art that was attractive to me when I was young and still is the most attractive and most often has been that which at one time or another, could be categorized as "counter-cultural art" I believe this term may bring to mind hippies from the '60s and '70s. But that is not necessarily what I mean. When one defines "counter-cultural Art" first one must define "cultural art." What is the art of the culture? Who is in control of the culture? What do those in control of the culture want to have come across as the "good moral" for the culture at large? The answers to these questions vary according to the culture. For example the first homo sapiens' hunter/gathering shaman/story tellers would have different wants than perhaps Aztec warrior shaman/story tellers, and perhaps different wants than the heads of the German Third Reich art ministries and perhaps different wants than the heads of media in our current culture. Who are the heads of media in our culture? Our culture is not a hunter-gatherer culture avatared by a shaman. Our culture is not a dictatorship headed by a monarch. Our culture is a capitalist culture. In our capitalist culture, where the most money is dictates who will be able to spread the word to the largest group. Where is most of the money in our culture? Money is in corporations. From a corporation's point of view things that make people feel good about the culture – and themselves – will make more people feel good about buying the corporation's products; specifically, films that posses morals which do not cause friction against the corporate ideals help these corporations sell their various products. Also the corporations that endorse the film/televsion/media can benefit either from the product that is made or the sponsorship it may provide in order to sell other products, or from all the above. This type of commerce mixed with art works well for maintaining "cultural art." Generally "cultural art" does not interest me. Sometimes it does. I tend toward liking art that fits more with the definition of "counter-cultural art." Right now, if something is truly "counter-cultural" it probably will not be backed by a corporation. This is because if any audience gets upset about something that was put forth in a piece of art that was backed by the corporation, the corporation will get in trouble by not being able to market to the audience that became upset any longer. At least the heads of the corporations feel this to be so. Therefore, without "censoring" art, people are merely hired by the corporations who will knowingly reflect that corporation's "culturally correct" attitude. If anyone should stray from this correct attitude they will simply be fired. This is how corporations get around censorship. There is no need for censorship when everyone is convinced that following the "good" moral is the best thing to do, because in that case, they will be hired, and not fired. In the corporate business of film and media everyone involved tends to have an attitude of how great everything is. It is an important attitude to have when working in film, because if you do not have this attitude, you will simply be replaced. This is called being a "player." It becomes known quickly who is a "player" and who is not. Those who are not "players" are generally shunned and not hired. There is not a conspiracy or a list or anything like that; it just becomes a feeling, and an attitude that becomes the general cultural attitude. The best thing that can happen from all this is when someone notices and makes their own movies. The problem with this system arises when an expensive medium like film needs sponsorship in order to promote a "counter-cultural" aesthetic. In the state of things right now there is basically no corporate support for "counter-cultural" art. The last time there was a "counter-cultural" film movement sponsored by corporations was in the late '60s and early '70s when the hippie movement was a relevant "counter-cultural" movement. The lies of that movement have unfortunately become part of the "truths" of our current corporate cultural ideal of art, and we are in even more dire need of "counter-cultural art" than ever before.

> Those who are not "players" are generally shunned and not hired. There is not a conspiracy or a list or anything like that; it just becomes a feeling, and an attitude that becomes the general cultural attitude.

A disappointing element I have noticed are the people who have made their own movies as simple advertisement that they are "players" instead of going to the areas that no one who is corporately backed can go. This means they do not go toward counter-cultural elements

The most interesting part is that every culture possesses propaganda, including our own. Propaganda works. The morals of every culture, including our own, can be easily based on truths twisted in such a way that they become lies. And people start to believe the lies are not lies, but they are "good" truths. Therefore if a "counter-cultural artist" reacts against the propaganda of the culture, and the culture believes the propaganda to be "good," a lot of the culture will feel that this "counter-cultural artist" is doing something "bad" or "evil" or "wrong." A movement interested in this very idea was the surrealist movement. Some of the terms, such as "propaganda," may not have been around at the dawn of the surrealist movement, but they were interested in some of the same concepts that are being discussed here. That was an interesting group. I usually do not like groups.

***What Is It?* has taken three years to complete; are you this much of a pefectionist/control freak in all aspects of life, or have you drawn it out so long just because you enjoy editing so much?**

I have enjoyed the editing process enormously. Without a doubt my favorite thing about making the film has been editing. I enjoy the problem-solving elements involved in it. I also enjoy writing immensely and the concepts that develop. The time the film has taken has not to do with the above query, it has to do with how the film came into being. Normally someone writes a feature script and then film is shot to represent the ideals that came forth in the screenplay. *What is it?* originally was a shorter film. The initial short film was edited to resemble the screenplay and it turned out to be a feature-length film. But it still had the depth of a shorter film, and I felt it did not yet have a complete psychology. The next couple of years of working on the film involved adding subplots, filming and editing them in such a way that the new film made a complete psychology. It finally feels like that. Sometimes it takes people three years to write a screenplay. A lot of the process of editing this film also involved working the story into it. This was the most time-consuming part, and the most enjoyable part.

Man, out of man, will make himself a frame, Seekes outward help, and borrows that of Fame. –Fulke Greville *An Inquisition Upon Fame & Honour*

What were your reasons for casting people with Down's Syndrome in most of the roles?

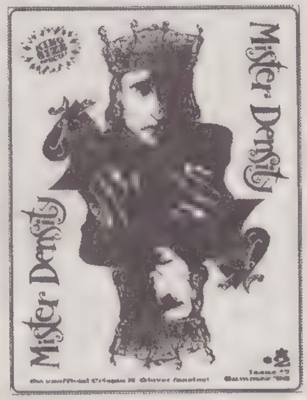
This film originally was a prequel to another film. In that script I had written most of the roles for people with Down's Syndrome. I wanted to prove to monetary investors that casting a majority of actors with Down's Syndrome could be a viable thing to do. There are many reasons, but one of the main reasons was that I knew these people would not have a self-consciousness in front of the camera that most actors posses.

How are you cashing in on your celebrity status in getting this film released? (go into your distribution plans here...)

I will play *What is it?* in art-house theaters.

You said that you're going the art-house route instead of cinneplexes because there are a few scenes that prevent it from getting past the censors. Why are scenes like the gorilla-masked naked women masturbating the Oyster Shell God so important to include?

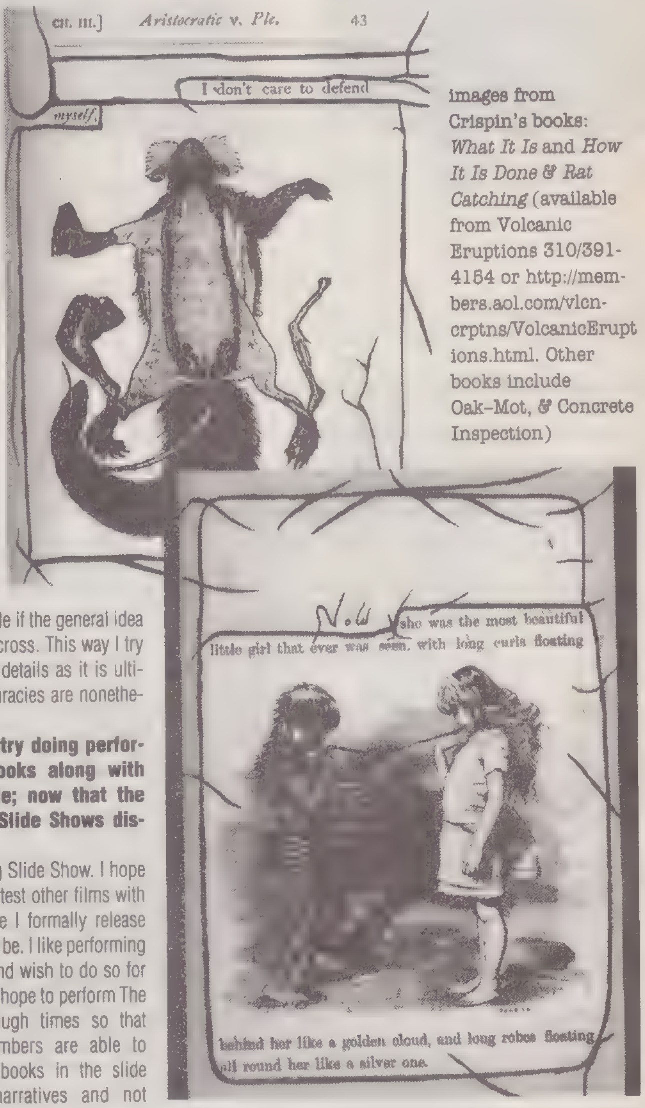
Getting past the censors is not quite the correct way of phrasing it. There are no such things as censors, really, in this country. There is such a thing as pornography, which legally is deemed anything that the community at large considers offensive. It would be interesting if the community at large found *Shindler's List* offensive. And then under the laws of the land no one under eighteen would be allowed to purchase a ticket to that film. *What is it?* is a film where no one under eighteen will be admitted. It will not be rated. Cineplexes will not show films that you cannot admit people under eighteen to, and this is true of most chain theaters as well. This is why NC-17 is a dreaded rating for corporately backed films. For me the film was made inexpensively enough that an art-house run will do the film well. Art-houses are generally owned by individuals, so there is not this kind of need for audiences under the age of eighteen for all films. Anyhow, that is where *What is it?* will show. The monkey-masked women (they are chimpanzee monkey masks) and the masturbation are a prelude to something that occurs in part three of the trilogy which is written by Steve Stuart, the fellow with cerebral palsy in the oyster shell who's masturbated. I would like to state that some people think Steve Stewart is mentally retarded when they view the film. But Steve Stewart is not mentally retarded at all. Steve Stewart is a highly intelligent man, and the graphic sexuality is inspired by and foreshadows what is to come in his script. Part one is *What is it?* Part two is *It Is Mine*. Part three is *Sexcapades*.



The now defunct *Mr. Density*

When Adam Parfrey was interviewing you for *Interview* magazine, they cut out the section on masturbation – as *BID* has no problem with such amusement, feel free to share:

Yes, *Interview* cut a few things and rewrote things as well. The part that was more aggravating was a different thing. The real issue of concern for the article was Adam asking me what I thought about Adolph Hitler. I gave an involved answer to the question and the fellow at *Interview* decided that the magazine should not be seen as leading a question about Adolph Hitler. So he cut the question down to read "Hitler?" – as though this was something I spoke about every day, and at anyone's suggestion of Hitler's name I would go into a long and involved speech about what I thought of him. It was absurd, and I asked in the end that it be removed, if they insisted on maligning the context of the interview. They removed that section of the interview. When the interview was being set up the person at *Interview* magazine (I won't name him since I believe he still works there) asked me if there was anyone I would like to interview me. I suggested Adam Parfrey. So they received some of Adam's books from Feral House. This fellow at *Interview* approved Adam interviewing me and set it up. They supposedly were well aware of Adam's work so it was irritating when they reacted to anything that could be deemed controversial as a bad thing. They did not simply edit the piece, but truthfully, they rewrote it. Rewriting means they would take a sentence I said and cut it in the middle and then add an end from another sentence. It is kind of like what I have done in some of my books. I consider that writing. I do not merely edit my books. I write them. This type of "editing" of people's dialogue is common practice amongst many major magazines. *Interview* magazine was hardly a terrible thing, I would do an interview with it again, but since you asked specifically I have told you. I have had other magazines write things I supposedly said absolutely opposing what I actually stated. You hear people talking about this happening all the time. It is not that interesting of a subject other than it is true, and it teaches you that you should never believe anything you read. Now I try to not actually read articles involving myself. I try to make sure the pictures are good, and ask other people if the general idea of what I wanted to promote comes across. This way I try not to concern myself with incorrect details as it is ultimately fairly useless to do so. Inaccuracies are nonetheless frustrating to say the least.


CH. III.] Aristocratic v. Ple. 43
I don't care to defend myself.
Now she was the most beautiful little girl that ever was seen, with long curls floating
behind her like a golden cloud, and long robes floating all round her like a silver one.

images from Crispin's books: *What It Is* and *How It Is Done & Rat Catching* (available from Volcanic Eruptions 310/391-4154 or http://members.aol.com/vlcncrptns/VolcanicEruptions.html. Other books include Oak-Mot, & Concrete Inspection)

You've traveled about the country doing performances/readings from your books along with test-edit excerpts of the movie; now that the movie's finished, will the Big Slide Shows discontinue?

I plan to continue performing The Big Slide Show. I hope to use it to be able to test other films with early audiences before I formally release whatever that film may be. I like performing The Big Slide show and wish to do so for many years to come. I hope to perform The Big Slide Show enough times so that repeat audience members are able to understand that the books in the slide show are simple narratives and not absolutely abstract entities.

Your books really force people to read slowly to absorb the text and imagery, similarly your movie sinks in better after pondering for a few days; what's your dissertation with time?

I am glad to hear this. My favorite pieces of art are ones that will strike me and perhaps confuse me, and I will have to view the piece again and again to get what I feel was coming from the painting/filmaking or whatever the medium is. I feel like often times this type of aesthetic is the one that has the most depth, although I can think of many pieces with depth that are clear immediately.

do you think anyone would buy your books if they weren't written by Crispin Glover?

If they weren't written by Crispin Glover they would not be my books. In any case, I always use Crispin Hellion Glover, my full name, as my writing name.

In the movie, the retarded kids yell at the minstrel who claims to be Michael Jackson: "You're not Michael Jackson! You're not a Celebrity! You're not special!" Do you equate specialness with fame?

In *What is it?* the actor who has Down's Syndrome that questions The Minstrel is an adult. None of the actors in the film are kids. Most of the actors are in their mid-twenties. People with Down's Syndrome often have a young feel and look to them, but all of the people in *What is it?* are adults. Anyhow the word "Special" is a term that is also used for people who are retarded as in The "Special" Olympics. This line can be thought of as a play on that particular usage of the word. But I feel wrong to even suggest an explanation of almost any type about the film. I have extremely specific meanings for all the poetic uses of the cinematic spectrum in this film, yet it is better if people use their own minds to come up with what these things mean to them.

You said that you thought the name *Ben Is Dead* came from your favorite Michael Jackson song...

I believe the title is "Ben". Michael Jackson sang this title song for the film *Ben* when he was a child. I believe Ben was a rat that dies in the movie. I am not certain about this. I do not know if I ever saw the film. I thought the name of the magazine *Ben is Dead* referred to this song.

What's the best thing about flying on an airplane?

Being able to look out the window at the landscape below. I particularly enjoy flying over the deserts of Utah, Arizona, Nevada, and California. These are also areas I like to drive.

Do you ever dream that you can fly?

I have.

Can you do a cartwheel?

Yes.

I equally dislike the favor of the public with the love of a woman – they are both a cloying treacle to the wings of independence. –John Keats (1795-1821)

Background photo: Adam Parfry (The minstrel) is prepared to be buried alive by Ricky Whitman and Lynn Connely. Photo by Robbie Capponetto. Above: Adam Parfrey and Lynn Connely share a romantic moment. Photo by Robbie Capponetto

When I first showed it to my mother she became very angry. She said something to the effect of, "You've taken all this time away from acting to do this?"

Tap dance?
I took a few tap classes when I was 14 or 15.

Tap dance as good as Shirley Temple?
No.

What's your favorite thing about staying in a hotel?
When everything is paid for.

Have you put money in the magic fingers?
I have never been in a hotel that had what you asked about.

Do you snack from the honor bar?
I do not know the term "Honor" bar. I suppose it is the food you have to pay for in the room or refrigerator. It depends on what is in the room or refrigerator, and how hungry I am. Usually I do not like the food they have available.

What do you impulse-buy at convenience stores?
If something is well-displayed I will look at it more. And if I need it somehow, it is more likely that I will buy that well displayed item.

What's your favorite flavor ice cream?
I have not eaten ice cream for many years. But I used to quite like Mint and Chip.

In your experience, how has sugar proven itself to be the root of all evil?
I do not know about it being the root of all evil but the only thing I have ever been addicted to was sugar. This started when I was a child, but especially in my late teens. I would eat an Abba Zabba bar, then a Three Musketeers bar, then have some Now and Laters and wash it down with a Coca-Cola. I started to get headaches. They would go away when I would drink Coca-Cola. I wanted to lose weight for a film when I was 19 and then another film right after that. At that point I stopped eating refined sugar. It has taken many years to get sugar out of my system.

What color is your toothbrush?
I have several right now in different colors.

What's your favorite eye disease?
I think my favorite disease in general is syphilis. The third stage of syphilis can affect the eyes. But that disease has so many interesting things about it. In the first stage there is just a sore, and that goes away quickly. The second stage of the disease may never ever show up, and it may not continue or it may. If the second stage occurs there are skin eruptions all over the body. The third stage also may never show up, then again it may. If the third stage shows up it is the best. The third stage can affect anywhere inside or outside the body. It can eat away the brain or any part of the skin or organs. Some people get something from the third stage of syphilis called "Cupid's disease." This is where the syphilis spirochetes eat away a part of the brain that makes people feel like they are in love. So many famous people in history have died of syphilis. There also many terrific photos and illustrations of this disease in pathology books throughout the ages. So that is my favorite disease even though it is not eye specific.

Are you a Freemason?
No. I would like to know more about Freemasons though.

Do you advocate Negative Population Growth or do you plan to someday breed?
I do advocate Negative Population Growth. I am surprised that pro-negative population growth is not a bigger issue on the media. It seems like so many problems would be solved with this simple solution. I hope I would not have more than one child if I ever did. One child per two people is still negative population growth.

What's your favorite ride at Disneyland?
It is gone now. I went there with a girl a few years ago. I do not remember the name of the ride, but you were shot inside of a human body through a hypodermic needle (*a microscope –ed*). The carriages were shaped like the ones in the Haunted Mansion. And you could see small carriages with small people going into the ride through the needle. The idea of the ride was that you kept getting smaller and smaller till you were small enough to be inside the atom. I cannot remember what happened after that. But it is gone now. The thing that I like the next best would be the Abraham Lincoln human sized animotronic human figure. It is interesting to look at this mechanical figure moving about as a recording makes speeches which emanate from the figure. The voice is inaccurate though. Everyone always gives Lincoln a low baritone voice, but it is documented that he spoke with a high-pitched voice. It is written there was concern about the effectiveness of his speaking voice. I always thought that was a very interesting character trait of Abraham Lincoln. I have never understood why I have never seen that made into an issue in any media involving his character. I am certain that would affect a public speaker like him greatly in life. Actually I hope I never go to Disneyland again. The hordes of people in T shirts with messages advertising things is truly awful. Diane Arbus took a nice photo there though.

Kids are cruel. What mean nicknames did they derive from "Crispin"?
As a kid and at Mirman School I was never teased. I never ever recall anyone that knew my name calling me anything other than my name as I was growing up. If anyone ever shortened it I would correct them. But I had no "Nicknames"

How did attending a school for 'gifted' youngsters shape your formative years?
I feel as though I am a product of going to this small private school called Mirman. This was a very unique way of growing up. I went to this school from first to ninth grade, which is when it ended. For all of those grades there were only about 300 children that went there. So we had small classes, usually fewer than twenty. I grew up with a few people who also stayed at the school for that length of time. I have talked to other people that went to different "gifted" schools and I think their experience was different. I won't say that it was better or worse but looking back it was an odd school in a way, although I am extremely glad I went there. First off an IQ test is given to the child when they are very young. I believe I was five. The children were told the school was for "gifted children. That is children who score high on IQ test. So the children are in this school, and everyone knows why everyone else is there. Therefore the idea of being intelligent is not considered a bad thing, but a good thing. This to me is what was best about that school. Being smart was never ridiculed, but revered. There was a dress code at the school when I went which was that you could wear anything you wanted except for tennis shoes, T-shirts, or blue jeans. After I graduated they started wearing uniforms. I know this dress code affected me in some way. But the most peculiar element of the school was the awareness of being looked at. There would be visitors that would be come in sometimes and observe the class. Dr. Mirman (the founder and principal) usually accompanied them. And all the pupils knew the visitors were observing your class because this was a class filled with intelligent children. And the pupils kind of knew they were supposed to act intelligently. Sometime television crews would come. This was weirdest of all. I know I was on a news show that was similar to *60 Minutes*. I wish I had a copy of it. I asked a question in science class that was used. I would love to see that. Anyhow I am certain that growing up in this atmosphere affected me greatly. But I have always considered it a good thing.

Which tastes better, play-dough or library paste?
I have not tasted the latter. Play-Dough is water, salt, flour, and food coloring. I remember making some with no coloring when I was a kid. I actually do remember tasting it. It tasted OK but I did not want to eat any of it. I think I cooked some to see what would happen, and as I recall it turned a dark brown and got pretty solid but was easily breakable. I just remembered that. I have not thought about that since I did it when I was about nine or ten. But I remember I had made figures, and baked them.

When you were little did you play Barbies with the girl down the street, with a cousin… did you have to sneak or were you encouraged to play with dolls?
I never played with Barbie. I think when I was three I had a Humpty Dumpty doll that had an O shape for a mouth. My father painted. One day when I was about nine or ten the next-door neighbor threw away a lot of plastic dolls. My father took them and painted them silver. The best one had a pull string that in soft quiet voice said "I want to hold your hand." I still have one that was a mold for a doll head. That was already silver. My father teaches acting and he had them in an acting studio for a long time. I have a photo of him with them somewhere. It is a double exposure that my uncle took and looks rather ghostly. I like that photo.

What else were you encouraged to do?
I was encouraged to behave in class. I had an interest naturally in writing and drawing and I was encouraged to do both.

What do your parents think of your movie?
It seems to have grown on my father as it has changed and come into completion. He likes it now. There are certain things he thinks are funny and those moment make him laugh. They are not necessarily the things I think are funny. He thinks it will find its audience. When I first showed it to my mother she became very angry. She said something to the effect of, "You've taken all this time away from acting to do this?" She was extremely angry when she said that, about as angry as she is capable of getting. I recall it well. This was an early cut of the film. I think she will come around to liking it more as time

Unless an artist or public celebrity is wary and firm, the disaster of success will deliver him into the public embrace, devour his time, corrupt his values, and addle his talents. –Judith Groch passes.

Do you talk so peculiarly (I don't mean this in a bad way – I sometimes even found myself phasing out on what you were saying and just concentrating on the timber of your voice while watching your hands fly about gesturing – it's actually quite hypnotic) because you used to have a stutter?

Well, I never have had a formal stutter. I probably stutter now as much as I ever have. And I do not want to misdirect anyone who would read this that I am what would be classified as is a stutterer, because there are people that have that, and I do not. People who have seen me in various films have probably seen the extent of my stuttering, which is not so much. I remember when we moved from New York to Los Angeles when I was four, that I did not like the accent people spoke with here. I always tried to enunciate my words well, as I did not want to have a Los Angeles accent.

Do you have any particular fascination with Beatles songs (as you've constructed one box-piece that plays "Let It Be" and one with "I Want to Hold Your Hand" – are there more?)

I purchased the music box pieces at Pic 'n' Save about ten years ago. I made my own music boxes out of them. There is one that has the melody for "Love Me Tender". That piece I quite like. Just so people know these are music boxes that move and have various scenarios that I have reconstructed.

What do the voices in your head instruct you to do?

I only have one voice in my head, which is me, and I instruct myself to do what I think is necessary at the time.

Are you a cat person or a dog person... or a rat person?

I suppose I enjoy the company of cats most.

As a child did you pour salt on snails, or you've just picked up this habit recently?

There was a time when I was probably four or five or six that I learned what happened when one pours salt on snails. I did this with fascination for a short time then realized it must be very painful for the snails and started to feel bad about it. So I stopped. I wrote the snail salting in the script for the movie, and I still did not feel great about it, but I knew it would work well in to the emotional consciousness of the characters in the film and consequently it would be a viscerally affecting experience for the audience.

Approximately how many snails were mutilated in the making of the movie?

I do not know. I like to tell people it was computer generated.

How else have you lived up to your middle name?

I think being given a name does affect how you are, and who you are.

What's the scariest thing?

Stupidity and conformity is the scariest thing. The lack of knowledge people possess making them not understand how they are conforming always makes me the most uncomfortable.

How often do you succumb to temptation?

It depends on what I am being tempted with.

Are you on any medication? have you ever been?

I am not on any medication. The only things I have ever been prescribed are percadan (Is that how it is spelled?) for when I had my wisdom teeth removed, codeine for various coughs, and antibiotics.

What's your philosophy on illegal drugs?

That they are illegal.

What's your philosophy in general?

I hope to write a book on this subject. But I have no idea when that will be available as I have too many projects right now that I need to finish and get out.

What is the fatal flaw of the human condition?

That there is a human condition.

Which parts in *What Is It?* attempt to reflect this?

It is self evident.

Why do you feel the world would be a better place if more people committed suicide?

I think it is interesting that certain cultures believe suicide is a "good" thing as opposed to a "bad" thing.

How many words is a picture really worth?

It depends on the picture

Which is better: when the phone rings or when the doorbell rings?

The phone is better to have ring unless I am expecting someone I want to see, then hearing a door bell ring would be better, although I have no doorbell.

A couple years ago, upon hearing that you were my favorite celebrity, this girl that I don't even know who happened to be next to me at a show informed me that you were gay, and she then proceeded to qualify with "my friend's friend's friend knows his neighbor" and that type of "evidence." How do you feel about random strangers who have no business doing so, speculating (incorrectly or otherwise) on your personal life?

People communicating untrue things about people they do not know happens inevitably. I do not concern myself one way or another about that, since I am not there when that happens. But if I am communicating with someone directly who believes something false is true about me because of something they have heard from someone else, I find that annoying.

So you seem to be or at least at one time to have been a Guy About Town as most everybody has a Crispin Glover Story where they or someone they know has seen you at a restaurant, an art opening, riding your bike, flirting with little gothic girls at dance clubs, dining with Pee-Wee Herman and Elvira at the Magic Castle, museums, on the street... as the years progress, do you find yourself not going out as much because you don't want to have to deal with people confronting you more often?

I have certainly been about the town, although concerning your above list I know I have never dined with Pee-Wee Herman or Elvira. Those of course are names of characters people have played. I have met Paul Rubens and (Is it Cassandra Peterson?), but to my recollection I have never dined with either of them. No, I find myself going out less because I have been working on my film for three years. I am hoping when I am all done with the film to get out a bit more.

I've also been relayed various accounts of how you react to chance encounters, from sarcasm, to refusing to shake hands, to being genial and friendly... You were nice to me considering I accosted you in the supermarket. What makes you decide how to respond, is it purely subjective or does good publicity have anything to do with it?

I always try my best to be cordial. I do not believe sarcasm is my forte, or think of myself as a sarcastic person. In general I do not like sarcasm. I do not believe I have ever been in the situation where someone has asked "Can I shake your hand?" and I have responded with a "No."

My friends Epcott & Shirley saw you at LACMA where you specifically declined his request for a handshake, and then scurried away.

It is possible that I have been in the middle of something, or on my way somewhere and someone will call my name and I will wave hello as opposed to shaking their hand. I try always to be polite. At my book signings after my slide show I definitely put my best self forward. If I am on the street in the middle of something I try to be as polite as the situation will allow. If someone is being discourteous I will try to end the encounter as easily as possible. This is rare. Certainly I do not want people going around saying that they met me and I was a jerk. That is not a good thing. I always advocate being polite in person. I believe in doing whatever is necessary for art and

photos (clockwise from above):
Crispin Glover as he appears in *What is it?*
Photo: Robbie Capponetto

Ricky Whitman and Robin Adams contemplate the protagonist's inner psyche.
Photo: Rocky Schenck

Eric Yeats is threatened with castration by members of the puppet show.
Photo: Robbie Capponetto

to do whatever is necessary for accomplishing whatever effect is needed. But this is different then real-life situations, in which I believe politeness counts.

After all these years are you still flattered by recognition?

I am flattered by compliments. Being recognized is not flattering. It just means someone recognizes you. If recognition is accompanied by a compliment that is flattering. You are not flattered by someone recognizing you, are you? For example if say, a relative recognized you at Thanksgiving, are you flattered by this recognition? Probably not. Now let's say a relative recognized you, and then stated, "You are marvelous." At that point you would be flattered. I guess this is all semantics, but I believe it answers what you asked.

What are some drawbacks your status has provided to you besides fanatical stalkers?

I do not think there are a lot of drawbacks.

What's the most obsessive thing one of your fans has ever done?

I lived at the top of a fourteen-story building for seven years. It was located off of Hollywood Boulevard. Outside one of my windows there was a very thin ledge led from the fire escape into my bedroom. I am not afraid of heights. But crawling across this thin ledge was literally death-defying. A girl did this to get into my apartment. I was not home when she did this. I came back one evening and she was outside my door with a girlfriend of hers. She told me what she had done and I thought it was funny. I invited her, and her friend in to tell me about this. She had taken a leather jacket, a photograph, a Xeroxed page of *Rat Catching*, and some underwear. I told her I wanted the leather jacket, photograph, Xeroxed page from *Rat Catching* back, but that she could keep the underwear. I was in good spirits and so was her friend but she kept getting angry about nothing at all really. I tried to change the subjects but she kept getting angry. And her friend started to get embarrassed. I knew at this point something was genuinely wrong with this girl. I did get the items I wanted back from her. But I avoided her. She did have some problems I could not help her with.

What's the second most?

More recently at one of my slide shows, a girl called me at my hotel who had been to the show the night before. She said she wanted to come over and visit me. One of the people at the venue must have told her where I was staying as I had not given the number to anyone. I asked who she was, because I recall there was a girl I met that I had quite liked, but I surmised it was not that girl. I said I was tired and did not want any visitors. She said she just wanted me to see her and if I did not like her that she would leave. I said "I really am tired. I will take your telephone number and call you if I want to do something later." She said that meant I would not call, and then she hesitantly gave me a number, which I wrote down not intending to call. I got off the phone and went back to sleep. About fifteen minutes later she called me on the house phone from the hotel lobby and said she was from *Entertainment Tonight*. I laughed and said "Do you really think I think you are from *Entertainment Tonight*?" She again insisted on coming upstairs and after just me seeing her she would leave. I refused. She kept calling back. I called down to the operator and requested my calls blocked until I called back down. Then there was a knock on the door, more knocks. I heard this girl saying things to me outside the door. I could not understand how she got my room number. I should have called downstairs at that point I guess because this meant a hotel person had to tell her my room number, which I think is illegal. In retrospect that still bothers me. Anyhow I looked through the peephole to see what she looked like. She was one of the first people in line from the night before. She was not bad-looking I guess. But I certainly was not in the mood to meet anyone. I just went back to my bed. She started saying she wanted to come in and speak poetry to me. So she started speaking her poetry outside my door. Then it sounded like she was in the room. I looked around the corner, and I guess the door had not been completely shut, but the latch was keeping it from opening all the way. Her arm was inside trying to undo the latch (which was impossible for her to do) as she was talking and sometimes saying poetry. She did this for a while. I became kind of intrigued with this. I realized I could go near the door and look at her face as she was trying to open the latch. So I did that for a bit. It was an interesting perspective. Someone walked by in the hall and she quickly moved back to the ice machine closet so they would not see her doing this. I shut the door completely so she could not get her arm inside anymore. She came back and tried to open the door, and kept talking. I was getting uninterested in the spectacle and genuinely wanted to rest. She said she was going to sit there until I came out. It looked like she sat down by the door out of my eyesight. I went back to bed, then I got up, took a shower and wanted to get something to eat. I did not want to deal with this person when I went outside so I did call security before I left. I was not frightened, I just did not want to deal with it. But she had apparently left. Later someone at the hotel said there were two people here and described her and some guy that she was with in the lobby as being quite belligerent. I told them someone in the hotel must have given her my room number, but they said that was not possible. Anyhow the best thing about this was the fisheye peephole/arm through the door perspective.

Who's your favorite lunatic?

Lunatic? I guess you mean someone who is psychotic? I like Caligula, because people were in trouble if they did not do what he commanded them to do, and he made them do funny things.

Who's your favorite serial killer?

I am not certain.

Which superhero do you most relate to?

Superman

What was the last item that you shoplifted; when?

I am not a shoplifter.

What's the best birthday present you've ever received?

I like it best when I spend my birthday alone with a girl I like.

If someone was trying to bribe you, what could accomplish the task?

A lot of money. But it depends on what they were trying to bribe me to do. There are a lot of things I probably wouldn't do.

How protective are you of your material possessions?

I am very protective of my material possessions. I asked the painter Joe Coleman what he would do if someone took one of his paintings and smashed it. He said, "I would be worried for them." I thought that was a good answer.

Describe your favorite knick-knack.

You must mean a favorite displayed possession. I have many I like. I would not like to have to choose. But I do like the nineteenth-century case of wax deceased-eye replications I purchased in England.

Approximately how many hours of TV do you watch per week/what're your favorite shows?

I do not receive any incoming television signal. But when I have been filming on location I most recently enjoyed the daytime talk shows and Discovery channel documentaries.

What's the most desperate thing you've ever done for money?

"Desperate" implies a short term need for money, and I have not been in that situation. I try to plan about monetary situations as far in advance as possible.

If you had to go on a game show, which one would it be?

I was invited to be on the *Hollywood Squares* about twelve years ago. I did not go. I still would not like to be on any.

Clowns – good or evil? Why?

I had a song on *The Big Problem Does Not Equal the Solution The Solution Equals Let It Be* about a clown. The song was titled "Clowny Clown Clown." I made a video for it also. I have not thought much about clowns for a long time. I have never been terribly fond of clowns. I tend to not like slapstick humor. Although I do like violent humor.

Computers – good or evil? Why?

I like computers. I edited my film on my computer.

The Internet is:________(fill in blank)

Helpful.

Why do you wear so much black clothing?

In my mid-to-late teens and early twenties I would wear only old clothing. Old clothing falls apart rapidly though. I still own a lot of old long coats which are my favorite articles of clothing. More recently I decided it is easier to wear a lot of black. You can buy things that will easily match what you have already, and you do not have to think about what you will wear so much. I have liked to stay in concentration while editing the film. Even not thinking about clothes has been helpful.

Why don't you wear glasses?

I try to always wear sunglasses when I go out during the day. I do not need prescription glasses.

Do you have any scars? (How'd you get them?)

I have a small scar on my eyelid from six stitches needed for a skiing accident. I have a scar on the upper part of my wrist when my second girlfriend and I had a small disagreement, and she dug her nail into my hand. Since this is the "celebrity" issue I will mention that this was as we were leaving Madonna and Sean Penn's wedding where I met Andy Warhol. The disagreement was a small thing, but the clawing did leave a scar. I remember her commenting later that she had made a good scar.

What did you give Sean Penn and Madonna for their wedding gift?

I made it. It was inside an antique wood and glass case. There was a small baby figure hanging from the top, but instead of a body it only had an arm coming from its head. It was all silver. Underneath was a milk carton. It was covered entirely in black India ink, which was somewhat shiny and chalky at the same time. An inscription was scratched in to it so the inscription was white on black. The inscription read: "Here for you Madonna and Sean on your wedding day is a milk carton, a milk carton to milk Sean's penis." It was actually a very nicely made piece. Madonna wrote me a thank you note for it, but I do not know where that has gone now. Apparently the piece was placed on their fire place mantle in their home in Malibu. People have told me they saw it their. A fire burned down the house a while back and that piece burned with it.

At any point in this interview have you lied? Which question(s)?

No, I have not lied.

Will you marry me?

You never know. Thank you for the good questions.

Which at one point in my life is all I would have needed to hear in order to start planning the wedding. So am I happier now than before I chased him down the soybean isle? I've had dozens of phone calls, emails, hung out with him for awhile at a party in Venice where I traded him a serial killer autograph for a Magic Tricks comic book, he personally gave me copies of his books, and I got to not only watch his movie at his house, but spend an additional five hours alone with him snapping photos (and I swear he was flirting, but probably just wanted me to be happy with him so I'd take good pictures). But that's pretty much it. The rumors are true, he's definitely on the eccentric side, but I can no longer drive past his house in the middle of the night for fear of being recognized, and am sadly no longer positive that we were meant for each other. Oh well, there's always Jesse Kamp.

* * * * *

Look for *What Is It?* to be playing soon at a brave theatre near you. Also look for Crispin in the Neil LaBute film *Nurse Betty* with Renee Zellweger, Morgan Freeman, Chris Rock, Gregg Kinnear, Arron Eckhart, Pruitt Taylor Vince and others.

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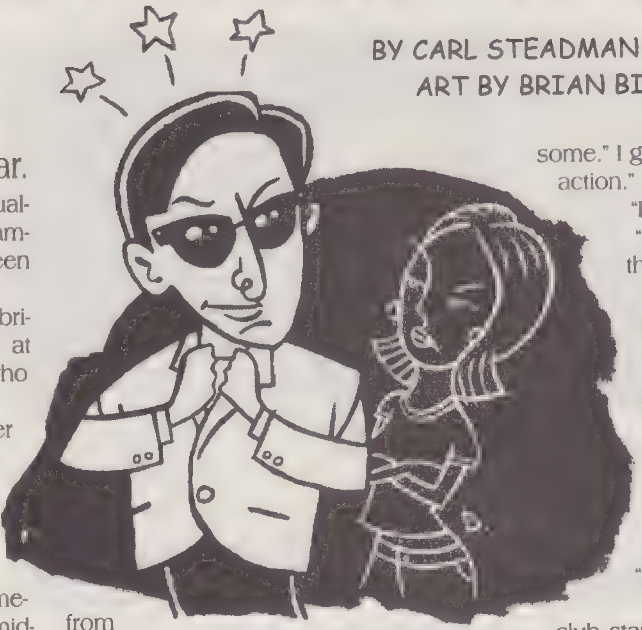
THE ONE-TO-ONE FUTURE

BY CARL STEADMAN

ART BY BRIAN BIGGS



It's not easy being a microstar.

For one thing, very few people actually ~know~ you're a microstar. For example, the maitre d' at Mecca. We've been waiting for a table for a good half-hour.

"I thought you said you were a celebrity," the nineteen-year-old I picked up at Club 1015 pouts. "Don't they know who you are?"

I shush her, patting the small of her back, bare skin between baby-t and beltless hip huggers. "I said I was a ~cyberlebrity~. Like so many others participating in the Internet economy, I'm taking advantage of the medium's natural predisposition towards disintermediation. So here I am, cutting out the middleman - and that guy you were with - building a ~one-to-one~ relationship."

"It's all very ~right here, right now~," I say, raising my voice to get the waitstaff's' attention. "All very leading edge. Sometimes," I say, looking out over the tops of my Ray Bans, "a little too leading edge."

"Oh. You're on the Internet?" Mel doesn't make much effort to hide her disappointment. "I didn't know the Internet had stars."

I smile weakly. "It has me."

Mel looks me up and down, as if I'm part of an invisible lineup of Letterman guests. "If you're famous, then why haven't I ever heard of you?" she asks. "Say," she says, less innocently, "that wasn't some kind of line you gave me, was it?"

I let out a short, world-weary sigh. Were we at our table, I would begin to lazily run the tip of my finger along the rim of my water glass; but, of course, we haven't been seated. Instead, I lightly stroke the nape of her neck. "If you've never heard of me, it's because of a vast media conspiracy."

"A what? Wait. You're not the 'You've got mail!' guy, are you?"

"No, no," I grimace, thinking of the frighteningly ugly truth I'm about to reveal. "It pains me just to think about it. But it's an undeniable fact that those behind the so-called consumer-oriented Net pubs are so concerned with short-term sales that they fail to take the long view and invest in their own future. They don't nurture their own. Look at me - I'm the real thing, but they'd just as soon write up how Leonardo DiCaprio ordered the *Titanic* soundtrack from CDNow than do a cover on me."

Mel blinks. "I met Leonardo DiCaprio in a chat room once."

I shake my head ruefully. "Oh, hon. That wasn't Leonardo DiCaprio. That was me."

My companion tilts her head at almost a 45° angle. "You know, if I squint just the right way, you do look a little like Leonardo DiCaprio," She pauses. "Wait a minute. Don't famous people have some sort of special talent? A reason for being famous? I mean, Leonardo DiCaprio acts. What do you do?"

"Oh, I act. You should see me do one of my PowerPoint presentations."

"That's cover material?"

"Well, consider the competition. After you take out Billy Crystal's bookmarks, there's not much left. Let's see: At the Silicon Alley Talent Show last month, Jaime Levy of Electronic Hollywood rapped about scoring venture capital. And the Media Lab's Nicholas Negroponte dressed down in diapers as 'the baby bits.'"

Mel wriggles slightly as she adjusts the straps of her tiny backpack. "Who?"

"My point exactly!" I say, chopping my hand through the air with each word. "We need to create an aura of legitimacy for New Media, and I'm just the man to do it. My plan's simple: I'll debut on the scene by dating a Hollywood starlet - I'm thinking a state fair beauty queen from Ohio with a few bit parts in the direct-to-video market - and I'll gradually work my way up to the *Entertainment Weekly* set. Fame through association. I'll be a New Media ambassador, cross-fertilizing industries - and then some." I give Mel a wink. "Convergence in action."

"It sounds perfect," Mel nods, "except for the dating part. Are they all gonna squint?" She giggles, then suddenly turns serious. "And where do I fit in?"

I look down at her silver-and-blue Fluevog shoes. "I thought you'd be my first groupie."

"You're such a star," Mel says, and turns to leave.

"Wait - you don't understand," I say, grabbing her arm. "There's real market potential here. Once you get the fan club started, there's a killing to be made from selling Carl-branded accoutrements to the digital lifestyle - and you get a cut right off the top. Setting up an e-commerce server will be like minting money. The Carl Shrines alone - what's that? a few strands of hair, a used crack vial with a mix of salt-water and Jovan musk for 'sweat,' and a votive candle liberated from the local Catholic church - and we're raking in the tall dollars."

"Oh, Carl, you're so - generous."

I ignore her obvious sarcasm. "You do realize that this is a sacrifice I'm making. Do you think I really ~want~ to be a microstar, to offer myself up on the altar of celebrity? Do you think I want my day-to-day life to be reduced to blurbs in gossip columns, my name in bold, with three dots instead of a period? You don't think that I just want to scream out and say 'Look at me, Carl, the man ~behind~ the perfectly sculpted coiffure?'"

My soliloquy is interrupted by the maitre d'. "We can seat you now," he says. He motions toward an embarrassingly small table next to the kitchen.

I look from the table, to the maitre d's stare of measured boredom, to Mel's vacant eyes and defensive smile. Babyfat accentuates her dimples. Nearby, a balding, ponytailed man in a black turtleneck and gray sport coat says "friction-free" a little too loudly, his vowels slurred with alcohol. "I'm sorry," I say, "I think I've lost my appetite." I turn to Mel. "Not a bad PowerPoint presentation, was it?" I ask.

"You're sure to be nominated," she tells me, with mock enthusiasm. "It's got Best Actor written all over it."

Fame isn't important to me, because I have it. It's only important to those who don't have it. It's the only thing for which the rule, 'You can't miss what you never had' does *not* apply. –Anton LaVey

I WAS A SUPER HERO ON THE DATING GAME

by Howard Hallis

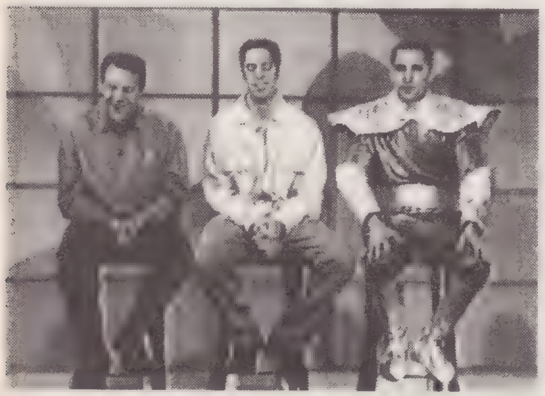
My friend Vince and I were out in Santa Monica in the tourist hell that is the 3rd Street Promenade when a cute industry-type girl came up to me and asked if I was married. I said no and she replied:

"Great! Would you like to be on *The Dating Game*?"

Well of course I would!

It wasn't for the slim-to-nil chance of actually meeting a potential fuck partner on television that had me excited about the show, it was the thrill of pulling a goofy prank in front of a nation of housewives and dim-witted morons that tune in to the program on a regular basis that made the gears in my head start turning.

The Dating Game theme had been looping in my brain for months before I was asked to be on it. I have no idea why. Maybe my subconscious mind can foresee game-show experiences in the same way that religious mystics used to receive visions of coming famines or bountiful harvests. The annoying jingle with all of its retro-horn blandness and white-bread sterility had latched onto my cortex with a vice grip that could only be broken by the firm handshake of Mr. Chuck Woolery himself.



The first step in getting yourself onto a game show after you have been approached by a talent scout is to go to an audition. These are basically cattle-calls for all the men and women selected at random from the malls, movie theaters, porno shops and other various haunts to try their luck at being spontaneous and interesting in front of an audience.

The room was filled with quite a few run-of-the-mill actor types and a few weirdoes like myself (including Satanic High Priest and fellow Cacophonist, Father Larry Wessel, who not only made it on to the show, but actually began working there as a producer after his appearance. Hail Satan!) Each of us took turns going up in front of the room and talking about our most embarrassing moments. This was supposed to let the Dating Game staff see how comfortable we would be talking in front of a crowd and therefore get an idea of how we would be when the cameras were turned on.

Most people described the time they got so drunk they puked all over their girlfriends or the bad date where their zipper was down all night. I described the time I was standing in a bucket of mashed potatoes in my mother's dress on a cross wearing a three-foot-long latex penis in a knight's helmet when my friend Michael Gump began hitting me really hard with a dead coyote he had picked up on the road that evening and had turned into a marionette puppet. Then I talked about the time we had beaten each other with dead fish buck naked in the bathroom of an all-night diner. This seemed to shock most of the room and I heard nervous giggles from the staff and wondered if I had freaked them out or impressed them.

Sure enough, they called me that week and said I was on the show. But one thing had to be cleared up: My profession.

I was doing freelance digital design and stocking the bar at The Viper Room at the time, but I always told everyone who asked the perennial LA question "What do you do?" that I was a professional super hero. This seemed to confuse people and give them an abstract image of what my intentions were. It sure as hell seemed to confuse *The Dating Game* staff when I put "Professional Super Hero" down as my occupation.

"What do you REALLY do, Mr. Hallis?" they would ask me.

But I was adamant that my true profession was a bona fide crime fighter right out of the pages of a comic book, and they finally relented. They said that they couldn't actually say I was a Super Hero, but they would let me dress like one on TV. (This made me wonder why there was such a taboo over saying that "Super Hero" was someone's job. Is it because Marvel and DC own copyrights on the title? Is it because they don't want to mislead the public into thinking there are actually individuals out there with the delusions that they possess powers and abilities far beyond those of mortal men?)

They asked if I had a super hero suit I could wear for the show and I said yes (I actually have a few.) They wanted me to wear a cape but I told them, "I'm not that kind of super hero," but I would wear something copyright free and really cool. They agreed to let me do my thing, so I dyed my hair blue and rented a blue and silver space suit from Ursula's Costumes in Santa Monica. I figured they would let me go on TV like that because anyone just casually flipping channels who happened to see some blue-haired space boy as one of the bachelors on *The Dating Game* would have to stop and tune in for a while just to see what the hell was going on. Sure enough, the staff loved my outfit and put me in a room with the other two guys I would be going on with.

The first bachelor was an actor who had relocated to Los Angeles along with every other waiter in town. He was really into Pearl Jam (AAAHH!) and was nice in a big lug kind of way. The second guy was a nationally ranked line dancer from Oklahoma City who worked in the computer industry. Both guys were put off by my outlandish appearance at first, but gradually warmed up to me and thought it was pretty funny.

Now, on *The Dating Game*, the bachelors and bachelorettes all get to hear the questions they will be asked beforehand. This is absolutely necessary or all you would see would be people going "Uhhh... Ummm... Uhhh..." every time they needed to respond. Getting the questions first lets us figure out what we are going to say and enables us to give quick, witty responses in the short amount of time allotted for our game. Does this mean the game is rigged? Not at all, because the main point is that the guy or girl asking the questions has to pick from the bachelors or bachelorettes on their answers alone, and I'll go on record saying that the production staff takes incredible measures to make sure the person asking the questions doesn't see any of the dorks answering them before they decide which one wins. We, for that matter, don't get to see the questioner either.

As we are getting ready for the show, a "fluffer" came in to get us all excited and boost our confidence so there would be lots of "energy" once we got in front of the cameras. "Fluffers" for game shows are not as friendly as they are for porno movies (not that I would know, but I'm just assuming) and the one we got was a cherry-lipped model/actress who was wearing my favorite Designer Impostors perfume in mass quantities and came in pretending to fawn all over us. She said stuff like: "You guys are great! You look great! You're gonna knock 'em dead! Boy, I bet you guys get all the babes!" I just sat in my space suit patiently awaiting the moment of truth.

When we finally got out to the soundstage and took our seats, the audience started to laugh at the way I was dressed and my blue hair but was quickly told to quiet down by the production staff. They could give the poor girl asking the questions no hint as to what was in store for her if she picked me.

The questions she asked us were stupid and I decided beforehand to answer everything with the most surreal response I could think of:

Q: Bachelor Number Three, I love sushi. What would you do if we were on a date and all of a sudden my yellowtail were to get up and start dancing around on the table?

A: Well, it's moments like that that I like to pull down my pants and start singing karaoke renditions of Lionel Richie songs in Spanish.

Q: Bachelor Number Three, In *The Wizard Of Oz*, Dorothy was welcomed to Munchkinland by the mayor. I have just arrived in Bachelorland and you're the mayor. How would you greet me?

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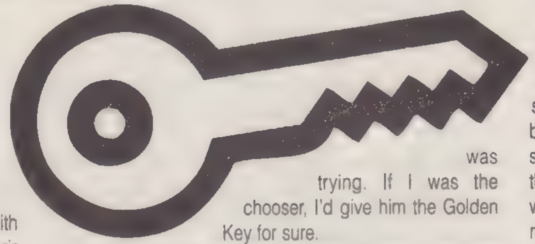
Charlie Chaplin used his ass better than any other actor. In all of his films his ass is practically the protagonist. For a comic, the ass has incredible importance. –Roberto Benigni

FAMOUS FOR 15 SECONDS - I GOT THE GOLDEN KEY



by Lorraine Mahru

Singled Out was a damn fine program. There's something so compelling about the process of elimination that made the show completely riveting, enabling one to succumb to several hours at a time (if MTV's nice enough to air a marathon for your viewing enjoyment). Last year for Chanukka, Estefany gave me MTV's *Singled Out Guide to Dating* book that was filled with pictures of the show's hosts, Chris and Jenny. I love Chris and Jenny. Chris Hardwick is so adorable, bitter, sarcastic, and thinks he's way better than all the contestants (which they invariably don't catch). For the first season it was obvious that he didn't even like Jenny, but he eventually warmed up to her (really who wouldn't?) and they would frolic about the set all touchy-feely.

There is no denying that former Playmate of the Year, Jenny McCarthy, is a Megababe. When Estefany and I go to the mall and see cute little outfits that we would never wear/would never look good in, we talk about how great they would look on Jenny. Her main attraction, for me, is not how easy she is on the eyes, but I love her for the same qualities that make so many guys claim to dislike her, despite her physical pleasingness: she's completely obnoxious (and I bestow that as the highest of compliments). She makes the wackiest faces, isn't afraid of being labeled vulgar or otherwise, and defies the Playmate stereotype by exploiting the airbrushed cliché, which scares so many of the would-be drooling males who watch the show. So many guys are intimidated, downright threatened by her persona, that they meekly sit there on the couch with their tails between their legs. I really admire women with the power to do this. (Carmen Elektra, on the other hand, embodies the Stick My Chest Out 'n' Giggle girl that Jenny's antics mock — no wonder the show's been cancelled.)

A few seasons ago when we were attending college, a recruiter for the show was on campus. He came up to us and said we should be on their 1950s prom night episode. I was ready to sign up right then and there, but this was before Estefany was enlightened to how great the show really was (it takes a few episodes before you can appreciate the dynamic), so she refused, and I didn't want to go on by myself and look like a big loser (whereas two big losers cancel each other out or something). A season or two later (I had hooked her by this time) when Jenny left and was replaced by the evil Carmen, we decided to go on before they took Chris away from us too. A few ulterior motives were also in play here: in addition to the fact that in high school I was voted most likely to be on MTV (and I can't disappoint all of the people who made four years of my life a living hell), Estefany had a crush on Little Angel Bob* (who really is darling with those rosy cheeks, not to mention the wings and the crown — and who doesn't love a man in glasses?), and I had a crush on Larry the Loser. Now I knew the guy with the puffiest hair in the world who always got eliminated in round one was a plant, but hell, I sympathized with that guy — I could relate. All he wanted was a chance, and if it meant sneaking into round two with a fake beard or trying to bribe one of the finalists in round three to change places with him, then hooray for his ingenuity. At least he was trying. If I was the chooser, I'd give him the Golden Key for sure.

So we called the contestant hotline, and they called us back and told us to go down to the MTV beach house, "Motel California" (located in Palos Verdes at the old Marineland location). We wake up at the crack of dawn (they stressed the importance of making the 9 a.m. call time) to get all dolled up for our debut; our goal to look as obnoxious as possible: Me in my neon orange wig, green rhinestone sunglasses, a swirly-patterned 1960s bathing suit, yellow tights, tons of cheap tacky jewelry, and yellow tennis shoes with orange laces; Estephanie decked out in fuschia from head to platform-sandled toe. We both had matching squirt guns for when we were eliminated.

We arrived at the site of so many former elementary school oceanic field trips, filled out some forms, braved the metal detectors, and stood in line for the screening process. We were screened four at a time by some bitchy intern who apparently didn't care for our costumes and couldn't figure out why we weren't in butt-floss bikinis like the other hopefuls. She has you stand up (for the height category, to see how big your breasts are, etc.) and then tells you what word to write on the stickers you'll be wearing (they use you for the entire day of taping which is two to three episodes). She'd occasionally ask a question, like what my major in college was (art), but usually wouldn't bother and just told us what to put down. She was none too thrilled when we were asking her about the categories. When she told Estefany and I (we had been giving similar answers to all the questions we were allowed any input on so we'd get eliminated at the same time) to put down "dunk" for one category and the other two girls to write "think," you can bet we asked what the category was. "Oh, it's the brain category, but lighten up, it's all in fun." There was no way in hell that I was going to go on national TV as a dummy when the vacant-eyed sorority drones next to me were going to be considered even semi-intelligent. For the "ambition" category I let her label us as "secretary" while the psychology majorettes (have you ever noticed how many truly stupid people cop out and major in psychology?) got to put "secretary of state" (when I asked her on what criteria she was basing this on, she said that it was because of our majors). And I didn't complain when for the hygiene category she made us put down "needs a wet vac" instead of "needs a wet nap," but now I was putting my foot down. She acridly reminded us that she could ask us to leave if we didn't let her do her job. It became a battle of wills and I said that I would rather leave then go on TV with that label. She tried to convince us, but finally succumbed (if it had gotten that far, there was no way her boss was going to let us leave, firstly because we looked so cool and secondly because even though over fifty guys had shown up, there were only about thirty girls – which meant they had to have female staff members placed in the dating pool in addition to calling in paid extras as filler).

After that ordeal, we waited around for about two hours, and were then given a thirty-minute briefing on the rules of the show (cheer loudly at all times, don't stop dancing, what to do when you're eliminated, how to act if you get the Golden Key to round two, etc.), and then we waited some more. Finally they line us up to go down to the set. Another intern-type handed out bags they keep your car keys, jackets, wallets and stuff in, and tried to make us relinquish our squirt guns as well. Hello, this was a beach theme, it was going to be funny you dope. Finally he calls over his supervisor to reason with us, who of course thinks that we're brilliant. Well, he realized that it would make for a better show anyway, and let us keep our weapons. They led us to the platforms we would be standing on, and who else but my would-be boyfriend, Larry the Loser, came out to give us our next briefing! He didn't seem at all like the resourceful geek dancing to the beat of a different drummer that I squealed with delight over at home, but kind of had that arrogant Orange County jock mentally (and not just because he couldn't stop making comments about the thong-clad Raiderette cheerleaders who held the category signs). Gosh, I knew he was a plant, but I didn't know he was SUCH a plant. *Sigh.* More illusions shattered.

So we're dancing like fools (hell, it's not every day that you get to humiliate yourself in front of millions of viewers world-wide). When we're eliminated in round one, we walk by the chooser, squirting him with water. He jumps up with a yell and lunges toward me. We figure he's mad and is gonna try and take away our guns, so Estefany turns to help me fight him off. Much to my absolute shock, he throws the Golden Key** around my neck and tosses me over his shoulder frat-boy style. If you caught this episode you can see the look of utter panic across my face. First off the producers are yelling at Estefany to keep walking, and I was so certain that there was no chance of receiving the Golden Key that I hadn't bothered to pay attention to where they said to go in the event that I was the recipient; all I remembered was that they said to execute an exuberant little dance of joy and be really excited about it (they also said that you weren't allowed to give the key back, so that ruled out that plan of action). So I'm in round two next to all of these little girlies in bikinis. Estephanie is laughing hysterically at me from the loser pit. Ha ha ha. Carmen has her arms around me and I'm making displeased, grossed-out faces at her into the camera (which for some reason they edited out) when it's time to spout a clever little epigram that rhymes with your name (such as, "hi, I'm Tanya and I can't wait to get on ya"). Now as I did not want him to pick me for a stunt that might eventually lead to God forbid winning a date, I try to be as unwelcoming as possible and say "My name's Pandora and my box stays closed!" It worked, because I wasn't singled out for something embarrassing (and though in the previous seasons the chooser actually had the option of "keep 'em or dump 'em", now they have to keep them if they do an individual stunt – it's all an act when Chris offers them the choice). When it comes time for final cut, I have to get into the swimming pool with the other remaining finalists to shake my ass at the underwater camera. Now Carmen does this nasty little dance that makes her butt look like Jell-O, which is dubbed "The Carmen Elektra Wiggle". When I see her do this famed nasty thing on TV, I get all grossed out and feel more than slightly used and icky. The contestant who did this wiggle the best was going to go to round three. Does the phrase "no fucking chance over my dead body" mean anything here? So I did some shimmy thing that was not following directions next to the tiny underaged bums of the others, and, relieved, got to go join my friend in the loser pit.

Now as it happens there were two guys there who had the same idea that we had, and showed up dressed in full clown regalia: face make-up, plaid sportcoats, big shoes, the works – LA Cacophany Society would've been proud. We were happy about this (four big losers), so the producer asked me and one of the clowns if we would do a little segment for the next episode (to be filmed after lunch) with Larry the Loser. Sure I would – so he's not my dream dork,

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***: Who is Little Angel Bob? A little fat boy (OK, he's probably in his mid-twenties, but has that baby face) who they dress up in saggy undies, angel wings, and a crown who is a player in their little comedic sketches and whatever.**

**** The Golden Key: A special necklace that that the chooser can throw around your neck as you walk by him after being eliminated which rockets you to round two instead of the loser pit.**

She says things like, "Uh, what did you think about my last phone call?" –Liz Smith, on Raquel Welch

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A: Hello! This is Baron Boris Bon Big Berries! Welcome to Bachelor Land! We're gonna go on over to Hollywood and get some Borsht Stew! (I was cut off by a commercial before I could say any more.)

Now the funniest moment of the show was when I was censored right in the middle of filming. Apparently my answer to one of the questions was a big no no for daytime TV. Here it is:

Q: Bachelor Number Three, we're on a date and both of us realize we have no money. Where do we go and what do we do?

A: Well, I know where that guy Screech from *Saved By The Bell* hangs out and I figure we could go stalk him all night. We won't get too close... just close enough!

After I said this, the director yelled "Cut" and the production assistant came up to me and explained it's against the law to threaten cheesy celebrities on lame-ass game shows because we might actually inspire someone to really go out there and fuck with Desmond Diamond or something even worse (gasp!). When we reshot my answer, I couldn't think of a witty response so I said, "We could go back to my house and reenact scenes from *Miami Vice*," which was a really lame lame lame response. Since I didn't actually get to see the entire show when it aired, I only have other people's accounts of what they decided to put in the broadcast. Apparently I say something like "Well, I know where that guy Screech from "Saved By The Bell" hangs out and BEEEP BEEEP BEEEP BEEP BEEP!" Which is sooo much better because that seems to imply I was saying I wanted to go have sex with him (or something in that ballpark).

Well, the girl who was picking her bachelor decided to go with the line dancer instead of me. Her reason? His response to the question about going somewhere with no money was to take her home to meet his parents. She liked that. I guess the naked karaoke singing just wasn't her thing.

Oh well. Fuck her. She was fugly anyways.

I still got to run down and meet Chuck Woolery, who shook my hand firmly and was probably thinking to himself: "This guy's a freakin' weirdo!" Yeah, it was too bad I didn't get to win that all-expense paid vacation to Arizona (woo-hoo!).

After the show wrapped, I went with the other two bachelors to The Spaghetti Factory across the street. The Line Dancer bought us drinks (I guess he felt sorry for us since we lost) and started telling us about his life. He was a nice enough guy (I guess) until he started saying stuff like "I'm not a racist or anything, but boy those niggers really get me going sometimes!"

As I sat drinking my beer with my blue hair and space suit still on, I kept thinking about the reason shows like *The Dating Game* and *Love Connection* never have racially mixed dates happen. It's probably because this guy, the winner of our little journey into the minds of the dimwitted boob tube masses, represents the typical viewer of these kinds of shows. The dumb-as-you-wanna-be young urban professional closet racists and conservative "professional moms" who tune in to see those happy couples ride off into the sunsets.

It made me glad that for at least half an hour when our show was finally aired that some of them out there thought it was all going to hell. That the cloud of normality and decency and racial segregation was so ever briefly infiltrated by a blue-haired space-suit wearing Super Hero.

Howard Hallis tried to get into Corey Feldman's Acting Naturally class but it got canceled at the last minute for lack of interest (we think he was the only one who signed up).

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but you don't just get over someone in half a day. So after lunch I ask one of the babysitters for the bag with the car-keys so I can re-apply lipstick. They tell us we're not allowed. Fabulous. So we're back on the platform (by this time, Estefany's scalp is sunburned to match her bathing suit), and Little Angel Bob infiltrates the Raiderrette Cheerleaders and is smirking holding a category sign. During the break, Estefany seizes her chance and tells him that she'd give him the Golden Key. He just kind of looks at her blankly and doesn't answer. Larry pipes up and says, "Oh fine, you wouldn't give it to me?" When it comes time to do the blurb, apparently Larry's not feeling well (poor baby) and won't come out of his trailer. Instead they tell us (the clown and me) to dance about while Chris says something unclever about us being the product of fertility drugs gone wrong. Oh well.

So as consolation prizes, they have big stacks of tiny little look-at-my-chest tank tops with the Singled Out logo for girls, and t-shirts for the guys. I asked for a t-shirt. Another nazi intern would not give me one because girls can only have the boob tops. The supervisor wouldn't even let me switch. I was incredulous – talk about sexism. The funny thing is, a few weeks later they phoned wanting us to come back and tape some of the studio shows because we were such a big hit. I briefly thought how I could wear my pink wig, but remembered about the t-shirt. The girl on the phone took down my address and promised to send me one, which to this day has still not arrived. I gave them an entire day of my life and they wouldn't even give me a lousy t-shirt.

Look for Lorraine go-go dancing in the Austin Powers movie, and Shout in Los Angeles.

SICK OF IT ALL

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I never get bored, because there's always different puzzles, I'm wearing different clothes, there's different contestants, there's different prizes. –Vanna White

HEY SCULLY

BY NANCY NATHAN

l'Echo des Savanes

It's been six weeks since me and my girlfriend of two and a half years broke up which makes this all a little sicker than it already is. It's Friday night and I've decided to go to this overly hyped new Lesbo club which is making its West Coast premiere tonight. I'm not really that into it, but it was my idea so I'm making me and my friend drinks, Stoli and pink grapefruit juice, when I get this urge to just back the fuck out of it all but she's in my living room waiting patiently for her cocktail which I've just decided to make a double, along with mine, being that it's too late to flake. When we get there, I give the chick my money and step in, realizing I've just paid someone five bucks to feel really old for the night, so I head straight for the bar, order myself an overly priced drink, suck it down and order one more, ready now to meet the girl of my dreams. But I really don't want that, I mean, I just broke up with my girlfriend (or did she break up with me?) and I just want somebody to make out with. So I start looking around for a kissable girl, but it's really depressing, not the girls necessarily, just the whole thing in general: lesbians with (new) vintage clothes, (new) tattoos, freshly bleached hair, pierced bellies, all jittery with excitement at the thought of being seen by other lesbians of similar qualities. So we decide to go into the other room where the bands are playing and by the time we make it through the first band I'm kinda wasted and I realize this making-out thing just isn't going to happen, which is kinda depressing but pretty typical, being that lesbians are all talk and no action. I mean, you can't just pick someone up and make-out in the back seat of your car, you gotta, like...talk about it (I call this processing). So you gotta process - what should we do and how should we do it and what sort of boundaries do you require and I'm really in need of my own space and can we negotiate personal needs and what about your walls do you have walls or ex-girlfriends perhaps yadda yadda yadda, which is why the make-out thing isn't going to happen, and I suppose it's just as well, since it's not terribly feasible and probably derived from watching too many episodes of *Happy Days*. I used to want to be Fonzie.

My friend says he wants to say hi to one of the pseudo-celebrity types whose name is behind this horrific place and whose name I won't mention but let's just say she kinda used to be a model, then she shot junk for a while, then she decided to get sober, and now she's giving interviews to low-profile, glossy zines about her career and all her girlfriends and celebrity friends and blah, blah, blah. So my friend tells her that he saw her twice in one day driving behind him and she says something about stalking him and we're really unimpressed so we go back to where the bands are playing and I see this girl with ponytails who kinda looks like a cross between my ex-girlfriend and Dorothy from the *Wizard of Oz* which both excites me and nauseates me at the same time, so I tell my friend to go tell her I think she's cute, I mean it goes along with the whole high-school thing. So he starts walking over to her, and right as he's about to turn and point to me I panic and make a run for it which pisses my friend off and makes me feel like an idiot and after another drink I ask him to do it again but he won't, which is probably best anyway 'cause I don't feel so hot and the music is too loud and I'm starting to get dizzy. Now we're at the bar taking refuge with a couple of girls we know and I've kind of had a not-so-serious crush on one of them forever and the other one says something about working for Matthew Rolston, and I'm feeling really warm and cozy right about now, like I never want to leave my barstool, but I have a really small BLADDER and I've been peeing at a rate of once every half hour. So I go, and when I get back I convince my (boy)friend to dance with me, which is a perfect example of how truly fucked up I am because I never dance, and as we're dancing(waltzing) to AC/DC I accidentally spill some of my drink on this girl and after I apologize profusely she just gives me a dirty look and walks away like I don't even exist, like I'm not even worthy of delivering her an apology. So I pout back to my barstool with tail between legs and tell my story to the Matthew Rolston girl who completely empathizes with me, so now I kind of have a crush on her too and sitting between these two delicious girls I'm thinking life is beautiful and order another drink to celebrate and then I think I get a little cocky, 'cause this girl walks by with two cocktails in her hands and I take a sip from both hoping she'll slap me or something but she doesn't, she just smiles, and later when I see her in the bathroom line she offers me her drink again and I oblige thinking maybe I should ask her if I can kiss her, but my thoughts are slow and blurry and she's clearly gone when it dawns on me to do this so I piss contently and go back to my barstool. At this point I'm starting to move into that so-fucked-up-I'm-gonna-puke mode so I begin to order waters, one after the other, because I need to do something quick and the bathroom line is too long and I'll never make it outside and luckily the waters work and I'm relieved 'cause I hate throwing up and I haven't since that time I went on a health kick for a week and ate bad tofu. At this point, I decide I wanna go home 'cause I've seen enough lesbians to last me the next two years. I can't help it. I don't like my kind.

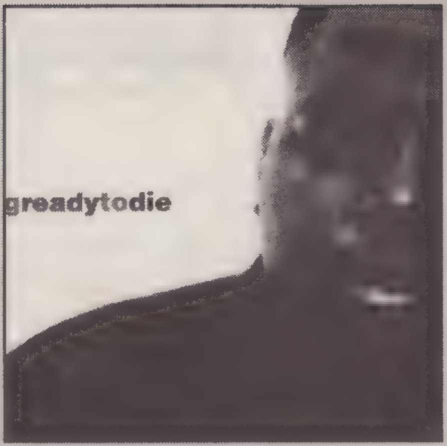
"HEY"

I wake up about one today, drink a gallon of water, and call my friend to say thanks for driving home the drunk (me) and get back in bed after a half-assed attempt at coffee. I

Barabara Stanwyck who, when we were waiting to go into our scene for *The Bride Wore Boots*, would whisper, "Come on, Bob. You know you'd like to fuck me. Admit it." –Robert Cummings think I kinda fall into one of those quasi-sleeps where you get to kind of pick your dreams and you sort of float in and out and I'm thinking about this girl that I have a crush on, not any of the ones from last night, those were environmental crushes. I'm thinking about this girl I really have a crush on, "Geek Girl," I call her because she is so nerdy it's absolutely angelic and I'm starting to kind of get to know her which has made it worse because she's a REAL GEEK, not that pseudo post-riot-grrl-geek that's been fabricated by X-girl and that stupid music video that what's-her-face does. Anyway I'm thinking about something she muttered to me the other day at work while passing me in the hall, something really trivial, like "Hey," but for some reason it turns me on and I masturbate to this acutely, her word, "Hey," over and over again in my head until it produces the most amazing orgasm which is so weird 'cause I realize I've just had really intense sexual feelings over the word "hey" and I wonder what it'll be like when she says "How's it goin'" or something.

SCULLY

It's about fourish now and I've just had a snack, feeling good cause my headache's finally gone and after another attempt at coffee, I succumb to my bed again. What else are you supposed to do on a Saturday afternoon with a hangover except eat and masturbate? So I get back in bed feeling sort of tired in that dreamy kinda way hoping to get another good run out of "Hey" when Gillian Anderson appears, or Scully, I'm not sure which, but I think she's Scully 'cause she's looking very *X-Files* and I'm trying to make her go away 'cause I'm thinking about Geek Girl and I don't want to be disturbed, and then I remember a friend telling me that Gillian Anderson used to swing a little on the Lesbo side, so now I kind of understand, but I'm still not completely committed to thoughts of Scully and I sort of want her to leave me and Geek Girl alone cause I'm just starting to get nicely turned on at the thought of four-eyes, when all of a sudden Scully starts eating my ass. Now I know I told you I wanted to be alone with Geek Girl, but with Scully's face in my ass it's getting kind of hard to ignore if you know what I mean, and god does Scully know how to eat ass, I mean I'm about to go over the edge when I hear "Hey" from Geek Girl and it's like the two of them start battling it out or something and all I'm trying to do is have a good yank. Now normally I'd say I'm a one-lady sorta girl, but I have to admit Scully licking my asshole vigorously is hard to blow off and although Geek Girl uttering "Hey" to me still has profound effects on my you-know-what, Scully is winning this battle by far, and to make things worse (better), Scully is loving it. I mean she is truly loving eating my asshole and I'm loving it too, if I may say so. Anyway, I'm about to come and having a hard time choosing who I want to shoot my wad for, Scully, the ass-munching rim goddess, or Geek Girl, my four-eyed beauty queen. Well, I usually like a little emotion in my orgasm so Geek Girl is back and I'm feeling so close to her. I start kissing her (bedspread) and it's feeling so good but I'm getting lint on my tongue, so I switch to my comforter, and as I'm French-kissing it, I'm wondering why it's called a comforter and how many other adults make out with their comforters while masturbating. I mean, it's acceptable when you're a kid to fuck your teddy bear but swapping spit with your comforter is definitely risky. But it feels so good and Geek Girl doesn't want me to stop and as her chewed-up fingers are nicely moving over my clit and I'm kissing her softly, Scully comes back and starts eating my asshole again and at this point I'm in no position to protest so I let them both have at it, and as I'm quickly falling into a state of guilty, sticky, dirty delight, I realize girls will come and go, but blankies are forever.



I Dream of Biggy

BY AYALA BEN-YEHUDA

I first started having dreams about Biggy Smalls (a.k.a the Notorious B.I.G.) about a year before his mysterious assassination. Biggy would always sweep into my subconscious with his posse of bitches and ho's, as well as other assorted henchmen. I could never actually see his face; I simply knew, as often happens in dreams, that the heaving silhouette advancing menacingly towards me was none other than his Notoriousness.

I didn't listen to his music, but my friends occasionally listened to the rap stations, where his single "Big Poppa" was getting a lot of airplay at the time. When I first heard his name it cracked me up for reminding me of Peter Ira Grinch (P.I.G.), Tony's made-up crank-caller name in Judy Blume's classic *Then Again, Maybe I Won't*. Perhaps I should blame retro for Biggy's seeping deep into my psyche. Anyway, the whole thing disturbed me: I'd wake up in the morning feeling recently liberated from the rapper's threat, which was usually physical or implicitly sexual. He scared the shit out of me and liked to hold me hostage.

In the first dream I and other supermarket shoppers (but especially those of us in the sandwich aisle) were being held at gunpoint by Biggy and his crew. I don't remember too many details about this one, except the fluorescent lights, the mustard, and the screaming. His crew kept yelling at us to stay down while certain mayhem was happening at the cash registers (I couldn't see it, but I doubt Biggy's motives were political). I woke up scared, then thankful to be alive, then ashamed. What the hell was I doing dreaming about this guy? I barely knew anything about him.

I assumed it would be a one-time occurrence, but the nightmares proved to be recurring. Shortly before his Tupac-like death—presumably at the hands of a rival gang—I had another dream. This time it was me, Biggy, some other playaz, and the ubiquitous bitches in a hotel room. I just remember it being dark in there, and being forced to sit on the floor by the bed as he stood over me, waving his gun around.

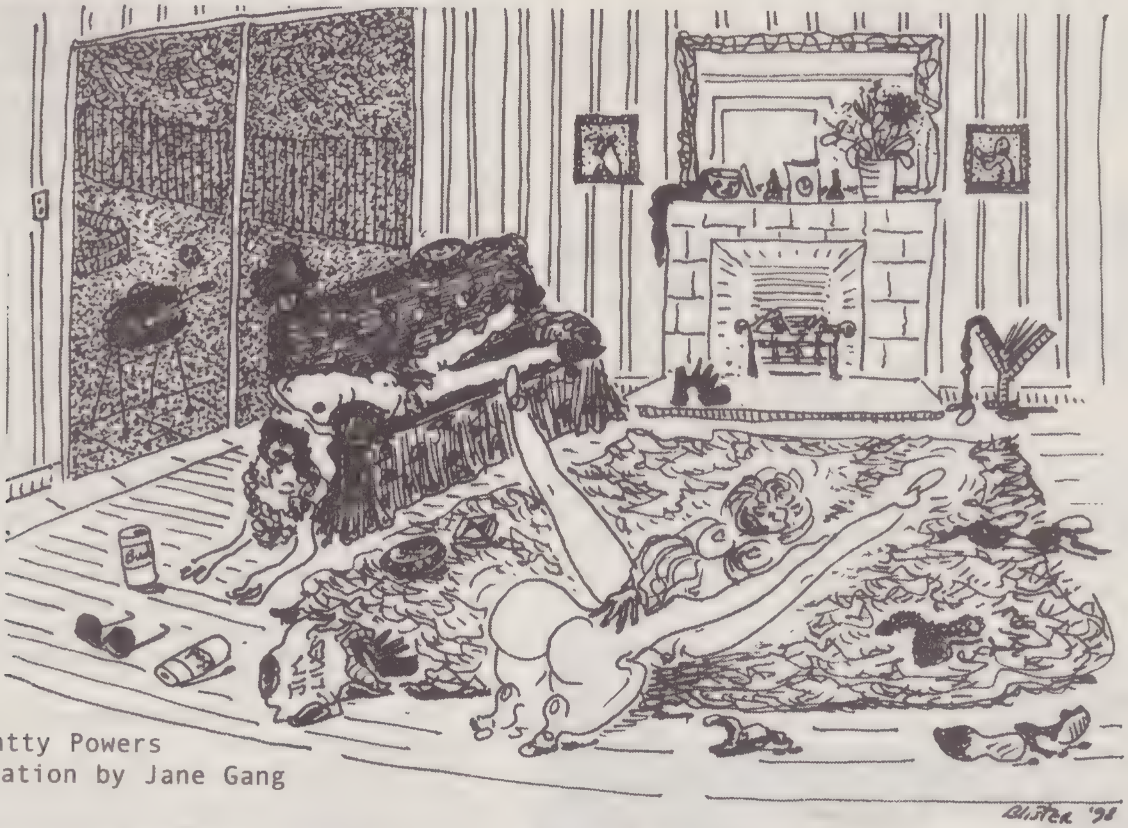
I don't know what this means, but it's clear that the Notorious represents something to me that I fear. The most obvious interpretation is that I fear rape, but why was Biggy the messenger? Maybe because he's black, and blackness has been traditionally linked to rape in the white mind since the days of slavery. Or maybe what I really fear is sex itself. He did have that sensual round belly, which is at once repugnant and strangely comforting, reminding me of the days when I used to listen in on my father's belly as if it were a seashell, listening to the acid indigestion as though it were the ocean. Who the fuck knows?

When I found out he'd been killed, I wasn't sad, just creeped out. Had my dreams been some sort of premonition? No, because unfortunately I never did get to be Biggy's bitch. I guess we're bombarded with so much media stimuli that even marginal celebrities can find a home in our subconscious. Biggy just stayed a little longer than most. I think I've evicted him; I haven't had a Biggy dream in over a year, although the last one consisted of him getting really mad at me for knockin' boots with another rapper, whose braids identify him as Coolio. To quote the man himself: "Now she fuckin' him and fuckin' me! See, you know that ain't right...."

I didn't feel well earlier. That's why I fit into this dress. I was actually in the toilet all day. –Jennifer Lopez, wearing a very tight dress at the premiere party for *The Man in the Iron Mask*

fucking dead rock stars

or Postmodern Groupies



by Patty Powers
illustration by Jane Gang

My leopard-print spandex dress was scrunched into a tube around my waist. Jane slithered out of her red plastic hot pants and slammed down onto my face. White vinyl thigh-high boots pinned my arms against the floor. I didn't like their smell or the sweat they created against my skin. As if reading my mind, Jane slid down the length of my body and began licking. She looked up at me from between my thighs. Her face was wet and she was giggling. We turned to make sure Jim was watching. Jane tugged my hand and we crawled over to the sofa. The moment had come where we'd get to fight over who would fuck Jim Morrison first. Jane unzipped his fly and pulled his jeans past his hips.

"Patty look at this," she gushed as his cock was released. "It's beautiful. I didn't expect it to be as big as his."

Her enthusiasm was genuine. His cock was perfect. Unfortunately nothing seemed to be happening to it neither in her hand or in my mouth.

"Jane, do you think he's...Is he..."

WAIT A MINUTE. Hold on. I've gotten a little ahead of myself. I know this sounds almost too porn-movie perfect – the boots, the cock flattery, the girl-girl action – but given the context of this story it makes sense. I know most *Ben is Dead* readers cut to the chase. You run your eyes over the lines 'til you get to the sex scenes. So, since this is our last issue, I thought I'd accommodate you. But now it's time to give some outline to this story. Don't worry. We'll pick up where we left off later.

My idea for the Celebrity Issue came out of my shame for having been a groupie failure. When I was a teenager, other than by one member of Blondie I never got fucked by anyone. I somehow got backstage at all the shows, but my crushes always went unrequited. For some reason, I'd end up with the guy who wanted me to take him out to all the gay after-hour discos in Toronto. I never knew that there were so many closeted queers in punk rock bands. I ended up becoming friends with them all. Since I'd missed the boat the first time around, I thought it was time to take all my worldliness to a rock concert and try to get laid. My friend Jane agreed to be my escort.

After scanning through the paper for all the upcoming bands at Madison Square Gardens, I started to get cold feet. I could get past the embarrassment of having to chat up security to get backstage. I could even get past the fact that I'd probably wind up fucking some hairy rocker from a metal band. What I couldn't face was the possibility of being rejected. Let's face it. Times haven't changed. The talent most bands are looking for backstage comes in a teenage package. At 38, I would probably come off more like a record-company person or the caterer. I didn't have the heart for it anymore.

So, I came up with Plan B – a Doors cover band in New Jersey. The singer was reputed as being a dead ringer for Jim Morrison and they played a small South Jersey dive every Thursday. The plan was simple – we'd buy some tacky clothes that would draw attention to us, then we would fawn over the singer and treat him as though he were the REAL Jim Morrison. By the end of the night, we would take him home and blow his mind.

Thursday afternoon Jane showed up at my place with a bag of clothes. We made our hair BIG, put on some glossy pink lipstick and got dolled up. I picked out a little leopard spandex

The Beatles never had anything to say. It was always nice, happy stuff. What *did* they ever say? –Lou Reed

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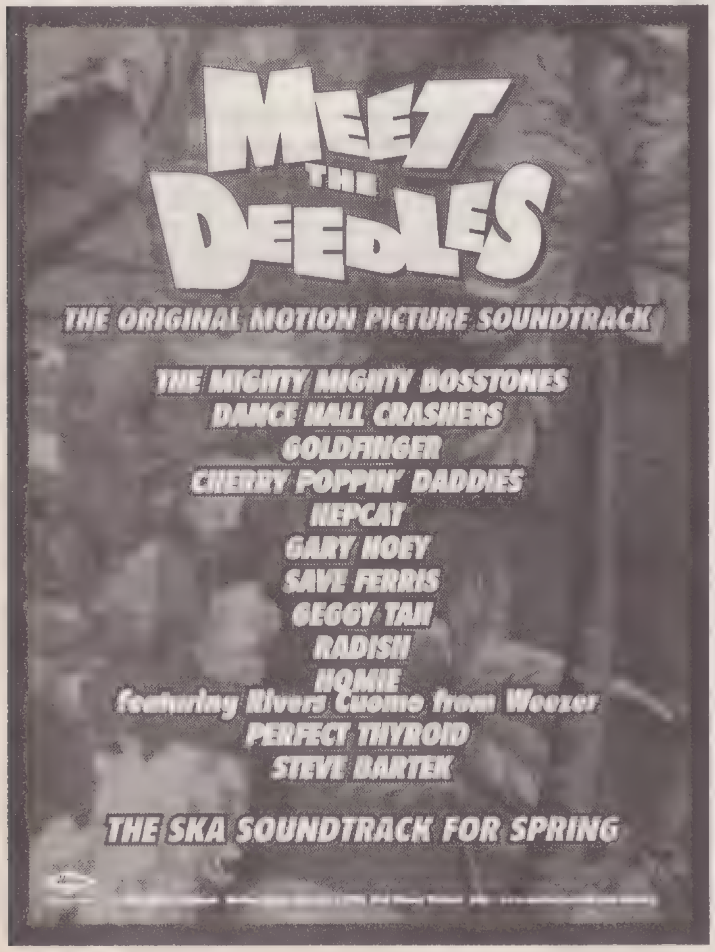

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Pretty Woman dress and silver platforms. Jane put on shiny red plastic hot pants, a white halter top, and thigh-high white vinyl boots. We were off.

The doorman made us pay to get in. The club was small but the band had drawn a fair-sized crowd. Jane and I caused a bit of a stir upon entering. Since it was South Jersey, I sort of expected we'd blend into the crowd, but that wasn't the case. Every person inside was wearing jeans. And then there was us. The only thing we'd forgotten were feather boas. I gave Jane one last pep talk and yanked her to the front of the stage. A couple of girls were dancing off to one side. Competition. Jane threw her bag on the ground and began dancing lewdly and grabbing at the singer's thighs. Minutes later, it became the Jane and Patty show as we screamed "Jim Morrison, pull down your pants like you did in Florida." The dancing girls hated us. The night was turning out to be more fun than I'd anticipated. We got thoroughly caught up in our farce. After the show, we waited by the amps for Jim to appear. Once the music stopped, so did my energy. Being overjoyed to be waiting for Jim to join us for a drink was a hard act to keep up. I was deep in the fantasy of driving back to Manhattan. By the time he arrived, I was bored and tired. I didn't have time to waste. He was barely finished with his first beer when I grabbed his crotch and whispered that Jane and I wanted to take him home and fuck him. I got a little more descriptive and hardcore until I was sure I was terrifying him. I wondered if there was such a thing as being "too aggressive" and worried that I'd blown our chances. He became a nervous 23-year-old in front of my eyes. I excused myself to the ladies room and let Jane take over. I hoped she'd be more tactful. When I returned, they were making out at the bar.

"Patty, we're in luck. Jim's parents are out of town and he has the place to himself."

Jim smiled proudly and guzzled the last of his beer. We followed his Cherokee back to South Amboy, New Jersey. In the car Jane and I got into the Jim Morrison cock fantasy. Since we'd been calling the singer "Jim" all night, neither of us knew his real name, and wondered if we'd bothered to ask.

The house was a small bungalow, comfortable and working class. He led us to his room in the basement. The Jim Morrison Shrine. While our Jim made a hundred phone calls to his buddies trying to get someone to come over so he would have a witness to the occasion, Jane and I amused ourselves with the Doors memorabilia. Nothing rare or of value. In fact he had more Jim Morrison mirror portraits won at amusement parks than any one human being should be allowed to own. He began playing tapes for us and making us guess which song was his band and which one was the Doors. That game got old real fast. Meanwhile, he continued calling friends and emptying one beer after another. Finally, he sat us on the sofa and began going through his band photo-album page by page. That was the last straw. Jane pushed me down onto the carpet and began kissing me.

NOW REREAD THE OPENING PARAGRAPH.

"Jane do you think he's . . . is he . . ."

Jane gave our date a shake. He was out cold.

"Just like the real Jim Morrison!" We busted up laughing. "Maybe he's faking us out." We shook him again. A little drool ran out of his mouth. It was time for us to go. On our way out, we left a memento.

Jim,
We had a wonderful time. You are an animal.
Love Forever,
Cherry Vanilla and Sable Starr

The best time I ever had with her was when I pushed her down the stairs in *Baby Jane.* –Bette Davis on Joan Crawford

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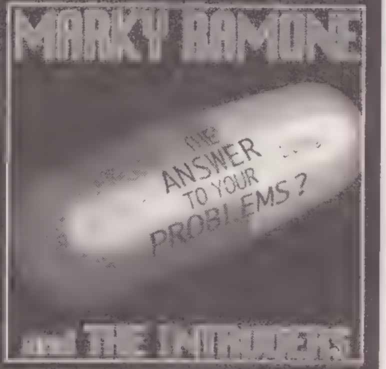

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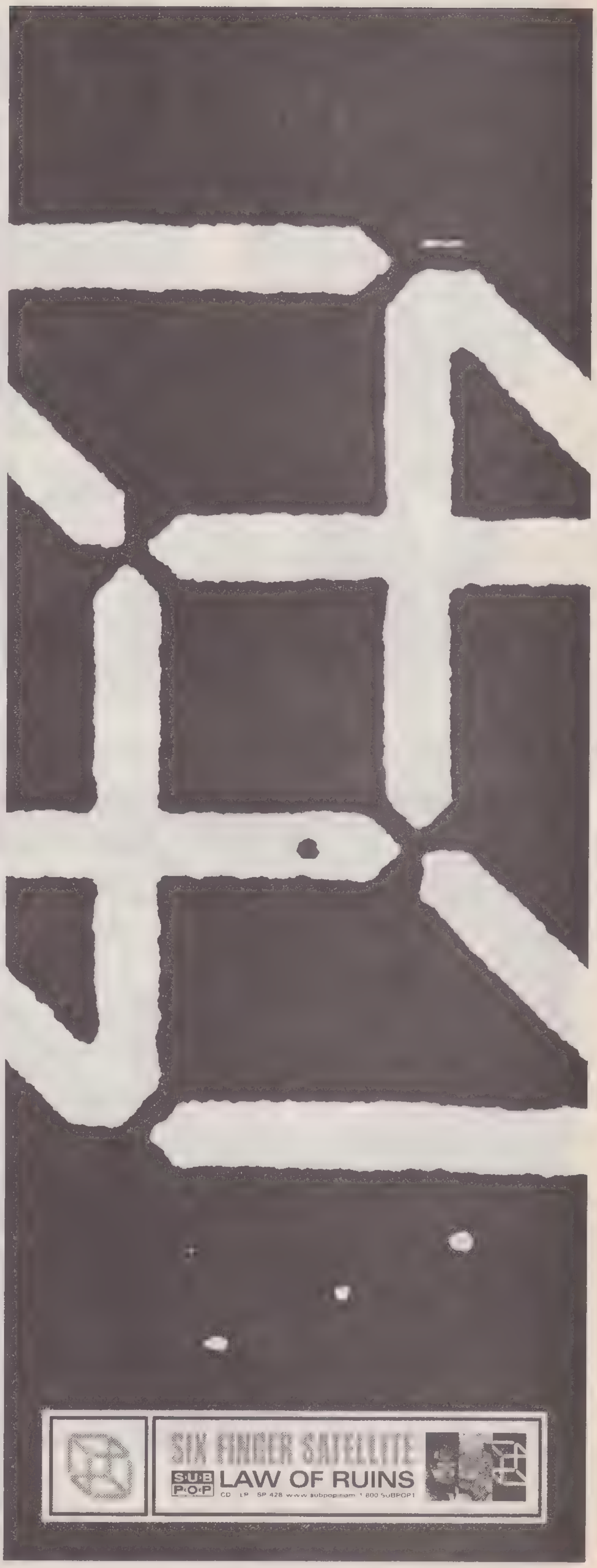

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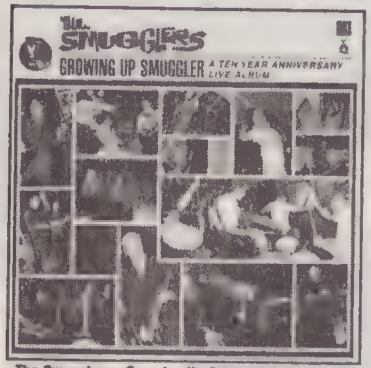
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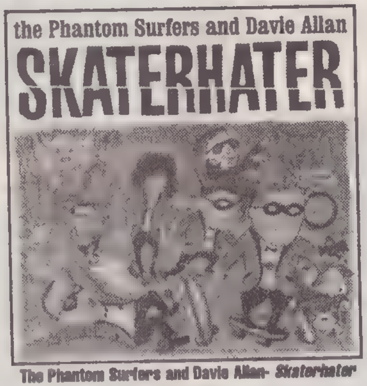
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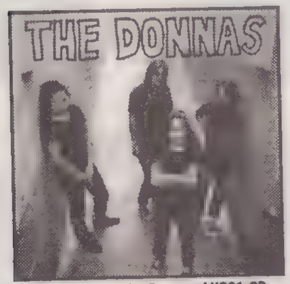

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I'M IN LOVE WITH A SEVENTY-SIX-YEAR-OLD BISEXUAL INTELLECTUAL

by Jessica Hundley

Gore Vidal and celebrity have, for a quite a long time now, gone hand and hand, merrily skipping through nearly a century of American politics, television, film and literature. Vidal's grandfather was a famous senator, his father an inventor and one of the early airplane pioneers. His half-sister was Jackie O. He was nurtured on the ever-present politics of his Washington, DC, hometown and on the endless films he devoured as a young boy in the city's theaters. "One day I watched four films in a row," he says. "It was the happiest day of my life."

At ten, Vidal made headlines around the world and appeared on the screen himself in a newsreel when he flew an airplane his father had recently invented. The boy flyer then went to all the best schools, hated them, joined the Navy, and published his first novel, *Willawa* at nineteen. He was an instant sensation. From then on his life would be tied closely to some of the most important and interesting people of the 20th century. His list of friends and acquaintances includes: Truman Capote, Princess Margaret, Tennessee Williams, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, Jack Kerouac, Marlon Brando, Maya Deren, Amelia Erhart, Alec Guinness, William Burroughs, Jean Cocteau, Norman Mailer, Allen Ginsberg, William Faulkner, JFK, Greta Garbo, Jack Nicholson, Charlton Heston, Leonard Bernstein, Anaïs Nin and Paul Newman. He would write for the theater, for television, film, and magazines as well as many, many more novels. He would create speeches for numerous Presidents and run for Congress himself. He would appear on talk shows, host radio programs, give lectures, and work as an actor in several films. He would travel all over the world settling finally into a cliffside villa above the blue Mediterranean in Ravello, Italy.

And he would fuck…a lot.

"I have tried everything. Not small children. Not animals. The vegetable kingdom, however, once held a great fascination for me."

My heart pounds.

Perhaps it's unfair to focus solely on Vidal's ambiguous sexuality. He is certainly a talented writer, a fascinating lecturer, and an extremely interesting man. His politics are certainly important as well. (He has consistently preached the dangers of the two-party system and big-business power. He said of the presidency; "It's the one thing I always wanted that I never got…But for the moment, let's talk about sex."

As everyone knows, sex and celebrity are like two sweet young peas in a pod. For a man born in 1925 and privy to the great Golden Era of studio-created myths, sex became more than simply touch or taste or smell. It became a thing of the mind, and more importantly, of the eye. Vidal's childhood was lush art-deco theaters, giant screens, red velvet, a bright luminous face and eyes which swam with tears. Celebrity was about glamour and sensuality and heartbreakingly beautiful women with glistening hair and pale faces. Sex was the creation and fulfillment of fantasy, it was not entirely tangible – it was alluded to, with a look, a walk, an innuendo spoken with the slow exhale of cigarette smoke. It was satin and voluptuousness, tuxedos and cleavage and whiskey and water. It was women with voices like gravel, men with hats pulled low over the eyes.

"We perceive sex, not as it demonstrably is but as we think it ought to be as carefully distorted for us by the churches, the schools, by the press and by – triumphantly – the movies, which are, finally, the only validation to which that dull anterior world, reality, must submit." Gore's own reality has been tied intimately with the cinema. (His usually meticulous judgment does come into question when you consider the fact that he turned down a part in *My Own Private Idaho* and accepted a part in *With Honors.*) His entire life, by his own admittance, has "paralleled, when not intersected, the entire history of the talking picture."

Vidal's history – and this country's as well – has been gently manipulated by screen images for almost a century. It is impossible not to question, like Vidal did, the validity of our own emotions. It is difficult to perceive sex as it is in reality, the sweaty, messy, intense and sometimes unspectacular act which we rarely see on the screen. Partly due to this vulnerability and partly due to his nature, Vidal has refused to perceive the sex act as anything other than what his individual experience tells him. After the death (in WWII) of who he claims was his one true love, a young Marine named Jimmy Trimble, Vidal seems to have made up his mind to approach sex in a thoroughly pragmatic and utilitarian manner. Sex is, for him, an outlet for an innate and unavoidable desire and should be as tidy and brief as one can make it. That's not to say he doesn't enjoy sex. On the contrary, he seems to enjoy it immensely, given his voracious appetite. He claims to have had sex with an incredible number of people, his criterion being simply that he found them attractive. He made no gender distinctions.

"You don't have sex with Woman or Man. You have sex with Jack or Jill. With people. Jill may be more soothing on Tuesday. Jack on Wednesday."

He seems to be open to virtually any variation, including orgies, although his one golden rule (which he rarely has broken) was never to sleep with friends. He has lived with another man for 52 years, and when once asked how the relationship continues, Vidal dryly replied, "No sex." This methodical approach to his desires did not save him from the occasional passionate affair. Two of his most infamous are with literary greats. Jack Kerouac's one-night encounter with Vidal is immortalized in his novel *The Subterreans.* Later, Kerouac would also dedicate a poem to him. Vidal's relationship with Anaïs Nin lasted a bit longer, but the sexual dynamics remain ambiguous. Vidal offers only: "We were both chickenhawks."

It seems that Nin's tastes were varied – Vidal and her other infamous lover, Henry Miller, was as different as night and day, fire and ice, so to speak. To imagine both these men falling for the same woman seems a near-impossibility, though Nin was a master chameleon. Her powers must have been extraordinary to entrap these particular perceptive, intelligent men. Any woman could tell you, just by perusing a few pages of Nin's infamous diaries, that the lady was a creator of chaos and melodrama, as well as being a first-class man-eater. She gobbled them up, digested their talents, then spit-up jumbled heartbroken heaps. Vidal finally recovered, although he still refers to her in a tellingly bitter way. These affairs, as well as an endless number of others, have made up the multi-patterned sexual fabric of his life.

It is important to note that Vidal spent his entire youth and most of his middle age in a time after the advent of penicillin and prior to the specter of AIDS. This is a period which saw some of the most revolutionary moments in human sexuality. Vidal himself was often at the forefront. In 1947 he published his third novel *The City and The Pillar* a love story between two men. The subsequent mayhem this book created established Vidal as a controversial figure in the country's ongoing sexual awakening. It wasn't until 1968, however, that Vidal really pulled out all the stops with his novel *Myra Breckenridge.* Without giving anything away, *Breckinridge* explored sexuality and gender with an intimacy that had perhaps never before been achieved. A wonderful piece of sensationalist writing, *Breckenridge* was published in the midst of the decade's sexual revolution. Free-thinking hippies everywhere were bested by a white upper-class middle-aged war writer and former Congressional. *Breckenridge,* the journals of a gloriously egocentric young Hollywood transplant, has more surprises and thrills than virtually anything I've ever read. Even my cynical mind, bred on the hyper-violence and overt sex of 1980s Cinemax, was shocked – and I mean truly, gapemouthed shocked – by particular passages in this book. To read it and realize that its author is still a respected figure in American politics is downright phenomenal. How did Vidal get away with this, with ambiguous sexuality and profanity in a time of notorious conservatism? The answer is charm. (Note: He didn't entirely come off scot-free. In *Myra*'s sequel, *Myron* he used the names of Supreme Court Justices in place of profanities in reaction to the censorship of *Breckinridge.*) The contradictions which exist within Vidal's character's sexuality is present in himself. Despite his deliberately practical approach to sex, the haughty, emotionally closed Vidal is in many ways the ultimate sensualist. His lush historical fictions, particularly *Julien,* which is set in ancient Rome, have all the decadence of the truly passionate creator. His writing, his physical appearance, and his lifestyle all belie an innate sensuality despite his reputation. This is often the case. My desire, like Nin's, often runs the two extremes. To the hotblooded, the half-mad, the obsessive, I open my heart. But the cold-as-ice are a welcome challenge. Gore is sardonic and cool in a patrician, civilized, Savile Row, anglophilic way. He once coldly stated that romantic love was purely a fiction created during the Middle Ages. Ha! Doesn't he know that this kind of talk only sets the stubborn soul on fire! Crack the thick ice of the cultured upper class and you'll find a nymphomaniac every time.

What I most admire in Vidal is his free-spiritedness, a kind of abandonment of conventional values with no restraint or unnecessary guilts. I do think that perhaps it was easier for Vidal to take this route than most: he was from a powerful family, he was white, well-educated and male. He claims he was born with a name and not money, which may be true, but even he would admit that with a name, money comes easier. The spawn of the famous are usually broke only due to severe sloth or a weakness for expensive drugs. In celebrity-worshipping America, even the most obscure affiliation with the monarchy (e.g. my grandfather was the voice of the talking horse on that show) will at the very least warrant some free drinks. Regardless, for a man born in 1925 and living in the puritan days of the new American family following the Second World War, Vidal was a hellion.

He sits amidst this century as a welcome anomaly, happily breaking archetypes associated with his generation, his gender, and his upbringing. A keen observer of this country and its literary, artistic, cinematic, and political stars, Gore is that enigma that's both friend and critic of celebrity who is, all the while, a star himself. Throughout the years his powers of judgment have rarely wavered. His views, be they political, sexual, or artistic, have nearly always been pleasantly radical, flatly stated, and firmly believed in.

One of the most elemental ways of understanding yourself and the world around you is attempting to understand the past and those particular moments which create the present reality. To know not just the great events of this century, but to know intimately the way a person felt and spoke and moved and talked, these are pieces of our history. To read Vidal is to see, cleareyed, the amazing moments of his extraordinary life. He is for me a living record of this nation's politics, its art, its literature, its cinema, its sexuality – a clean and steady view of a world which, due to the fickleness of fate, I was doomed to miss.

So there you have it. My obsession. The Gore Vidal I have discovered unwittingly: the celebrity, the political activist, the novelist, the screenwriter, the essayist, the playwright, the creator of *Caligula.* Enticing is he not? I don't know how it happened, this love for a 76-year-old bisexual intellectual. It overcame me all at once and without warning, like melancholy or a bad rash, and now he is like a virus in my blood. I hear him in his faraway cliffside manor, breathing slowly in his sleep and dreaming of naked boys and Hollywood starlets, and glamorous First Ladies and a long-lost teenage love.

* * * * *

Jessica Hundly is an editor at Boston's Mommy and I Are One *magazine.*

Go back to that wonderful Alan Jay Lerner song in *Camelot,* the one about "I wonder what the king is doing tonight." We really want to know what the king is up to. It must be something bred into us from peasantry. –Liz Smith

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BY RYAN BIGGE

PART ONE

GOOD ARTISTS BORROW, GREAT ARTISTS STEAL

I'm Ryan, a writer.

On Saturday, April 4th, 1998, I was invited to attend a party at (oh God, I can barely type the letters…) D-D-D-D-D-o-u-g-l-a-s Coupland's house.

I piggybacked my way in on an artist friend I'll call Dag (for the purposes of anonymity). Normally he would have been accompanied by his wife – but since she was out of town furthering her acting career, I got the nod as understudy.

Before the evening ended I would see Doug's bedroom and use one of Doug's bathrooms. I would talk with the wealthy and the not so wealthy, the interesting and the dull. Art-school girls and boys, friends, family, up-and-comers and hangers-on were all in attendance.

Here follows the story of Dag, Claire, Doug and I, told in a style that may seem familiar to fans of Mr. Coupland – a journalistic style of fiction which incorporates real people but twists their stories and identities around, a technique that allows for greater realism and helps to ensure that neither he nor I gets sued.

I don't feel I'm doing something wrong by writing about the soiree. I read somewhere that after you turn thirty, people start talking behind your back. Doug's 36. He's used to it by now.

SEMI-SWEET SECRETS

Instructions to Doug's house: Take the Lion's Gate Bridge northbound. Don't be alarmed when traffic mysteriously slows to a crawl when it hits the bridge's first draping span. It will shortly resume its normal speed. Get on the upper-level highway. Drive past the Cypress exit and take the Westmount exit. Take a left, a right, another right, and you'll be on a winding suburban street on the mountain of West Vancouver. At this point you're only half a song away from the summit – and the Coupland Compound.

What happens is this: We arrive early – unfashionably so. If Doug (I dropped the "las" the moment we parked in his cul-de-sac) is perturbed, he doesn't show it. Up close and in person, the author-celebrity is just over six feet tall, with an expansive forehead and slightly reddened skin that is otherwise pale to the point of luminosity. He is somewhat fragile and quiet. He is wearing something Gap-ish. His full beard – which makes him look outdoorsy – gives his words weight and his philosophy a deeper ring.

A quick tour follows, which includes the study where some of his books have been written. His study is separate from the rest of the house. It's deadly quiet inside the inner sanctum since the walls are triple-decked.

His koi pond has a miniature-scale replica of the Lion's Gate Bridge beside it, and his roof has some sculptures on it, including an oversized pipe (the smoking variety). Doug lets us explore the house at our leisure, and he goes off to make some final party adjustments. We quickly discover his front door has no doorknob.

BUY A LIFESTYLE, RENT A LIFE

The party: There are LARGE quantities of delicious, snobby North Vancouver food (if you ignore the gout-inducing amount of butter on the croissant sandwiches), great liquor, Doug gossip and a videotape of car commercials from the 1960s on his big-screen TV. And lest I forget, Bugles, Nuts & Bolts and chocolate Easter eggs placed strategically throughout the house – junk food enriched with irony.

It is all quite mild compared to my pre-party preconceptions – I believed this hillside neighbourhood would be the cradle of never-ending martini-clogged soirees and bawdy wife-swaps. So far, it is neither.

FAME BESTOWS ARTISTIC CREDIBILITY

My first surprise is the prominent role art plays in Doug's life. There's an Andy Warhol print of Mao Tse Tung in the foyer that's probably worth its weight in uranium, and a Warhol Brillo soap box that's probably worth even more. But the real showpiece is a James Rosenquist print that takes up an entire living room wall.

It's not all pop-art genius though. There is a lump of oversized Styrofoam in Doug's sculpture room – three or four feet high and about as wide. Industrial-sized Styrofoam, the kind used for keeping wharfs and docks afloat. Doug found this synthetic boulder under the Lion's Gate Bridge, dried it with the cleansing rays of the sun after dousing it with chemicals to prevent unfashionable odours from occurring. Beside the sculpture is one of those clear polyurethane inflatable armchairs you can buy at the better (pardon the reference) Gen-X stores.

Keep in mind this is the same man that had a solo exhibition of his sculptures at the Vancouver Art Gallery back in 1987. But with the incredible success of his books, I guess he can afford to fool around with whatever medium he chooses these days.

The rest of his house is tastefully expensive. The Doug house was built in the era of the first moon launches and was first furnished with dreams provided by *Life* magazine. There are bookshelves with glass doors, full of the various editions of all his books. Dag and I dutifully try out the Sony PlayStation in the library, which Doug purchased to research a book about Lara Croft of Tomb Raider fame. The kitchen has a large chalkboard upon which guests are encouraged to scribble and doodle. (The *Vancouver Sun*'s gossip columnist Malcolm Parry, a longtime friend of Coupland's, wrote "Vagina is Latin for scabbard" just before he left the party.) The kitchen is a popular spot as it's the wellspring of free liquor. I don't remember seeing any Absolut there, which is odd, since Doug recently wrote a short piece for an advertisement of theirs. His fee was donated to the Western Canada Wilderness Committee, but I assumed he'd at least get some free booze out of the deal.

The lighting and architecture is designed primarily to make everyone look *fa*-bulous. I am of course envious of his tasteful possessions, but I also wonder if Doug is simply growing old: aging with nothing to show for it except a heap of consumer durables.

If my description is lacking, take a look at Doug's photo in *Polaroids from the Dead*, and you'll see a bit of his house and the outdoor patio – the patio where Claire and I will soon share our all-too-brief moment together.

lower case, NOT LOWER CLASS

I spend a bit of time *networking* – with a twist. Ryan: *21st Century Sentences at 20th Century Prices* is my business-card tagline. On the other side, in felt pen, I've written tragic character flaws of some of the people in my life. I hand the cards "business" side up so that I can't see the random (yet priceless) advice the person is about to receive until they decide to flip it over.

The first person I give my card to, an entertainment lawyer, flips it over to find YOUR IDEALISM WILL IMPLODE. He raises his left eyebrow and tucks the card into his rear right pocket.

PART TWO

KITSCH AND TELL

Okay. I'll talk about Claire.

Claire is the evening's inevitable (or perhaps in her case unenviable?) lust object. Every party I go to (and there aren't nearly enough of them) has at least one.

We have first impressions in the sculpture room. She is sitting in the inflatable chair. I pretend to admire the Styrofoam. I end up admiring her, instead.

She looks up at me and asks, "Do you want to try this chair?"

"That would be great," I say. "Let me know when you grow tired of inflated luxuriousness."

She smiles, "Actually, I was hoping you'd rescue me. I'm sort of stuck."

I give her my hand. We exchange names.

"Ryan."

"Claire."

"Pleased to meet you," we say in tandem.

Our eyes meet and I see a part of me trapped inside of Claire. I don't remember when it became ensnared, or how, but I see a silhouette – traced in chalk on concrete – of my youth.

LOGIC IS COSTLY

Maybe this next idea will sound, well, *crazy*, but imagine if our life forces, our immutable essences, were as convertible as currency? Imagine if happiness and desire could be converted into a standard electrical current, yet still be imbued with the sort of transcendant powers we assume humans possess.

Literary fame is the only fame of which a wise man ought to be ambitious, because it is the only lasting and living fame. –Robert Southey (1788-1843)

Now imagine that our energy could be used by electrical appliances to maintain their appearance. So that if one decided to do nothing but watch TV all day, every day, then that television would have a radiant complexion – never dusty, its brightness and hues identical to the day it was purchased, great reception, even during bad weather – but the price paid for upkeep would be measured in mental and physical taxation, until, finally, we'd disappear into a small white dot, our life . . . *cancelled.*

Finally, imagine that we could choose the target destination of the energy we emit.

I want to believe that Claire can do all of these things. I believe that she can reinvigorate me. Claire's fresh smile and obvious youth make me flash back to a previous decade. She has the radiant glow of a thousand reruns trapped below her skin, a glow that could syndicate my happiness, an eternal, predictable sameness, refreshingly exact – a monochrome utopia whose blacks and whites I'm ready for.

I'll say more about Claire a little later. I'm out of quarters for now.

WEALTH COMES AT THE EXPENSE OF FRIENDSHIPS

I wander around and find five grown men hovering around the brand-new, red VW bug parked prominently in Doug's driveway. I join them in sniffing the tires and take a turn sitting in the driver's seat. The dashboard lights up like Tokyo at night.

Doug is watching us. He says that he "nagged the VW dealership" for this vehicular eyetooth. It was a gift for his mommy.

I can only assume that "nagged" means "bribed."

Doug is notorious for keeping his private life *private.* Tonight is no exception, although I must admit that I was hoping to meet a Doug love-interest. Doug is still unmarried, and I'm surprised that no one is hanging off his arm at any point in the evening. I always assumed fame and money equalled companionship, even if it is the sort of person that is only attracted to the money and the celebrity.

Dag mentions a rumour about Doug buying artwork from Dag because Doug found Dag cute. I hope Doug didn't buy the art for the wrong reasons – I say this because we couldn't find Dag's prints hanging anywhere, and also because Dag is married.

LIGHTNING ROUND: BIG BUCKS, NO WHAMMIES

Fun Fact #1: Doug cannot breathe fire. **Fun Fact #2:** Doug cannot levitate objects at will. **Fun Fact #3:** Doug's a pretty nice guy, if a little quiet. **Final Fun Fact:** Doug forgot my name within 20 seconds.

Of course, I forgave Doug for erroneously calling me "Earl." (Like I had a choice, really.)

I also have the disability of misfiling names and faces of people met at parties. I remembered perhaps three or four names all evening. But the personalities remain. Like the stockbroker in a mustard-coloured blazer, whose card said "YOUR MUTUAL FUNDS WILL SUBSUME A DESIRE FOR CHILDREN."

And then there was the gorgeous magazine editor in a black cocktail dress whose card read, "THE SOUNDTRACK TO YOUR LIFE IS NOW AVAILABLE THROUGH COLUMBIA RECORD HOUSE."

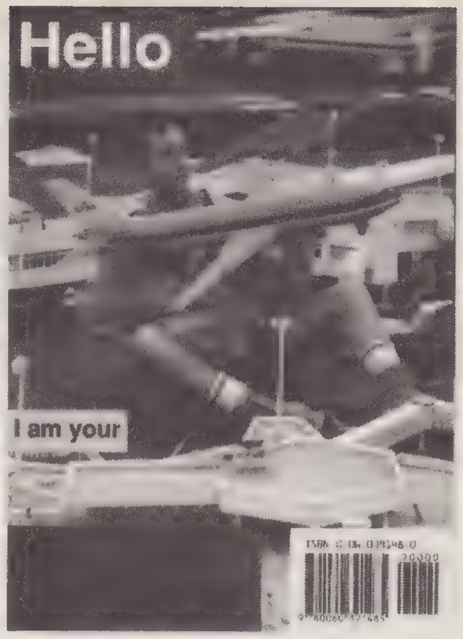
And finally there was the art dealer. Her card read, "YOUR AMBIGUITY WILL GENERATE APATHY IN OTHERS."

She glanced at the slogan and laughed. "You're beautiful, Ryan."

"No, *you're* beautiful," I responded, in my best Telethon-ese.

"Ryan, you are fabulous. Truly fabulous. Stop being so fabulous. Just *stop* it. The work you do for these people. It's…*beautiful.*"

What can I say?



ANAEROBIC VANITY

Dag knows Doug better than I, and thus confronted him with the question on everyone's lips: The Beard.

Doug's answer, to the best of my recollection, was: "At a certain point in one's life, you stop listening to new music and you need something else to tie your memories to. This beard will be linked with everything that happens to me during 1998. I plan to shave it off on New Year's eve."

Dag thought the real reason behind the beard was that it covered the scar that Doug is rather self-conscious about – note that most of his book-jacket photos favour Doug's right side. However, Doug had the scar removed in 1994, so the only thing he's hiding now is the memory. Beauty fades, narcissism lingers. (Interesting postscript: Doug shaved the beard off in Belgium, in late April. He lied to us.)

In case you're wondering, not everything Doug says is funny, insightful, or laden with golden-brown nuggets of pop culture. In fact, the beard comment was the only memorable line of the evening. Which is odd, because from the interviews I've read, he is rather skilled at producing high-quality quips. Gone too are the deadpan voice and the pauses after every few words that so many interviewers refer to. Is this, then, the real Doug?

Did I mention he played a lot of The Smiths during the party? Perhaps he was trying – subconsciously and/or unduly – to influence us into buying his new book, *Girlfriend in a Coma.*

YOUR BEAUTY WILL EXPIRE IN 14 MINUTES

Through the sliding doors I can see Claire sitting outside. Doug quit smoking when he was 26, so fuming is only permitted outside.

I step onto the rear patio underneath the eaves and sit on the edge of the cedar decking. The sounds of the party grow faint. There's moonlight but no moon visible and a single point of light comes from the tip of her cigarette.

What happens is this: Claire and I talk some more. She reveals clues, slowly. I do likewise. She is drunk, vegan and idealistic. I am none of the above.

I feel like a small planet orbiting around her, the gravitational pull between us firm and strong but unlikely ever to alter. After a conversation that she might have considered long and drawn out – a conversation I found too short – she excuses herself on the pretext of finding her friends.

Sigh.

THIS CHECKSTAND IS FOR PEOPLE WITH 12 REGRETS OR LESS

I read somewhere once – and unfortunately I can't remember where – that you only get one chance to fall in love for the first time. A lot of people are still waiting for such an event.

I don't think Claire loves me. Sometimes I think that "love" is never going to happen to me.

Tonight, Claire, tomorrow . . .

She is pretty and young and bright. But maybe she is only a conduit – a way to escape the muck and shit and pain and loneliness and horror that have so far categorized my 20s.

Or maybe I'm substituting Claire for someone else I loved long ago.

Or maybe the answer isn't temporal. Maybe the answer floats like a spectre – like the one haunting my dreams. Last week, I had a dream where I saw a way to survive the pain and muck, and I was full of joy.

I awoke hopeful, invigorated, only to have the solution evaporate before I could write it down.

I brood for another minute or so before returning to the big shiny party inside.

THIS PARAGRAPH CONTAINS 10% CONCENTRATED INSIGHT

I am here as a guest, not a reporter. As such, I feel Doug deserves a certain amount of deference and respect. Doing unto others, etc. As such, I steal no souvenirs, nor do I whip out a copy of one of his books to autograph, nor do I pitch him a treatment for my sure-to-be-best-seller. Nor do I ask any questions that will give me away.

Besides, I am a quiet man. I tend to think things through and try not to say too much. I spend much of the party in detail-gathering mode. In a small spiral notebook I surreptitiously record thoughts and observations for later.

PART THREE

DISMAY YOUR PEERS

What have I said about myself so far? Not much, as is obvious. I'm beanstalk-tall, shy and unaccustomed to being surrounded by wealth. I'm wearing a freshly purchased pair of Hypodermic Hipster™ brand pants, a plain white t-shirt that definitely was not bought at The Gap, my art-school-wannabe glasses and a pleather jacket with a sticker on the back that asks, "Are You Jimmy Ray?" If my life was a game of Jeopardy! my seven dream categories would be:

*Tin-Tin
*The Pixies
*David Lynch
*The Simpsons
**Adbusters* magazine
*Cultural critic Tom Frank
*Inexpensive greasy spoons

TEMPORARILY BOURGEOISIE

I read somewhere – and once again I can't remember where – that we have most of our important memories before the age of thirty. Thus I can only assume that this party is both memorable and/or important.

As you might be able to gather from my reflective and concluding air, I'm ready to leave. Except . . . *Dag.* He has been out of my radar for over an hour. I can only assume that after his nineteenth round of vodka tonics, Mr. Liver called an emergency conference. I search through the house a few times and ask some of the guests for his whereabouts before I borrow Doug's flashlight to better scour the estate.

The light dances over hedges and tickles the trees. After searching Doug's back yard I walk towards my car and see an empty glass nearby. I circle the car counterclockwise and find Dag slumped against the

A writer is hoisted up onto a pedestal only to scrutinize him more closely and conclude that it was a mistake to put him up there in the first place. –Simone de Beauvoir passenger door in a sitting position.

"Dag," I say, relieved and confused and fearful all at once. Dag is totally out of it – he's almost passed right out. Not his style.

For one long sickening moment I fear that this is life (or rather, lifelessness) imitating art. In *Girlfriend in a Coma*, Karen McNeil passes out in a rather similar fashion – and doesn't reawaken for 17 years.

Before I can get really worried, Dag, as if on cue, blinks and moans at the light.

"Dag. Are you all right?" I ask.

A pause. "*Hello.*"

LOW FIBRE MYTHOLOGY

Finally: Claire.

After assuring Dag that I'd be brief, I head back to the house to say goodbye to Doug and Claire. I find Claire first, since she is standing near the front door with three of her female friends, chatting away. I tap her on the shoulder. There is no explosion of emotion as she turns around and recognizes me. I motion her towards an uncrowded corner of the living room.

Her friends laser-scan me with actuarial glances. They probably find me a bit dull – marriage material. I guess they figure that with types like me they can return later, after they've been for a spin around the block.

My faux courage is fading, but her warm, cathode-ray smile reassures me. I stare at her intently. "Let's make this a short goodbye. Just tell me one thing you like about me, Claire. Just one thing, and then I promise I will go."

Claire pauses for a moment. "I like you because you have never been in love before. And when you do find love, I know you will survive such pain when it ends. You will always recover."

She then says "Goodbye," her voice contrived and synthetically perky. I stare down at my left hand and watch as I clutch even harder at the red halogen flashlight.

I guess she's right: I've never been in love, and *that's* a problem. I just seem to end up as *friends* with everyone, and I tell you, I really hate it. I want to fall in love.

Or at least I think I do.

ENDINGS BEGIN ANYWHERE

A few moments later I'm standing by the fireplace waiting for Doug to finish talking with a friend when a pair of fat arms grab around my waist, fat arms tipped with manicured fingernails. It is the art dealer I gave my card to, a woman in a sky-blue calico dress. I can see her long, dyed, fine blond hair, and she is leering somewhat as she says, *Let's do lunch*, meaning she'd like to see me again.

Before I can react, I feel another pair of hands from behind me, as another of my new "friends" joins in, this time the stockbroker. Then another pair – the entertainment lawyer. Suddenly I am being dog-piled by an instant family in their adoring, healing, uncritical embrace, each member wanting to show their affection more than the other. I am simultaneously confused and happy.

"Give me another card," pleads the gorgeous magazine editor.

"Me too."

"Me three."

Oh. Cartoon lightbulb moment. These people are so hungry for a way to understand this bleak world – a world without God, a world without history – that they find solace in felt-pen phrases printed on the backs of business cards.

The flippant McSlogans I created to amuse and anger my friends and family have become self-fulfilling prophecies for near-strangers. My one-sentence sound-bites resonate deeply in a shallow culture.

They begin to hug me – too hard – as though I *am* a doll, unaware of the strength they exert. I am winded – crushed – pinched and trampled.

The man with the beard comes over to yank them away. But how can I explain to Doug, this well-intentioned gentleman, that this discomfort, no, this *pain*, I am experiencing is no problem at all, that in fact, this crush of love is unlike anything I have ever known. This is what I have been searching for all evening, no…all my life. It is rough and crude, but it is genuine – and it is mine alone to savour.

Well, maybe he *does* understand. He removes his hands from his friends as though they are giving him small static shocks, allowing them to continue crushing me with their warm assault of embraces. Doug then pretends not to be jealous that he, for one brief moment anyway, is not the centre of attention.

I can't remember whether I said thank you.

* * * * *

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(Paragraphs 13, 16, 17, 58, 70, 82, 94-98 and 104-107 contain elements from Douglas Coupland's book *Generation X.* Paragraphs 7, 17, 19, 21, 37, 48-50, and 90-93 contain elements from *Shampoo Planet.* Paragraphs 2, 11, 19, 45, 64, and 74-80 contain elements from *Microserfs.* Paragraphs 8, 59, 63, 72, 81, and 89 contain elements from *Life After God.* Paragraphs 7 and 16 contain elements from *Polaroids from the Dead.* Paragraphs 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 12, 58, 73, 82, 84, and 88 contain elements from *Girlfriend in a Coma.* Paragraph 6 contains elements from an Alexander Laurence interview from 1994. Paragraph 66 contains elements from a Sept 21, 1996 interview in *Spike* magazine. Paragraph 68 contains elements from a Jenny Holzer multimedia piece. The rest of the prose is Ryan's. Except the bio. It's 80% plagiarized as well.)

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It is certain that I am not a great man, but I have an enthusiastic love of great men, and I derive a kind of glory from it. –Boswell

porn star

by lisa anne auerbach

Sure, he had a girlfriend, but this didn't stop me from fucking him in the handicapped stall of the ladies' room at the Good Adventure Hotel. He dragged me there, anyway, and if I did not kick and scream enough (I went rather peacefully) then please forgive me. He was five foot nine and built like a Mercedes, with greenish eyes that could burn a hole in a firewall. I don't want to mention the man's name, but let it be said for the record that he was a porn star, and a gay one at that. He was, as they say, "gay for pay," and anybody can take that any way they want. In my own world, I'd say it meant "bi," but a lot of these boys, these hunky American males, would rather say they're straight, even though they do a lot of onscreen fucking of male asses. I, myself, would think it would be difficult to have an erection if what you were fucking was something you had no interest in. But I'm no expert, and I do not possess a cock. If they want to say they're straight, far be it for me to interfere. I can handle the term "bisexual," but I won't shove it down anyone's throat.

This particular hunk, the one who casually grabbed me away, mid-sip, from a cocktail party, had just been awarded the trophy for Best Actor at one of the countless self-congratulatory award events held within the gay porn industry.

This is what happened, and I can only describe it cinematically, because that's how I saw it, even while it was taking place. I was in a movie, and it's not just because he's a porn star and I'm the chosen mortal. Listen to this: Woman (me) in (classic) "little black dress," dancing in a crowded ballroom on the second floor of a first-class, downtown hotel. To either side, tables full of gay porn's luminaries, boys wearing fishnets, tuxedos, or nearly nothing at all. Soundtrack: Hits of the '80s, with a dj booth presided over by a pudgy, well-known drag diva. Specifically, The Cars, "You're Just What I Needed." Woman, dancing, spotlit. Across the room, she spots Him. He's topless, showing off a chest that could have been stolen from a classical sculpture. He strides, confidently, towards her. I'd like to say the crowd parts, but there weren't all that many people on the dance floor. She's dancing and not really watching, but knows that all eyes are upon him (after all, he's the belle of the ball). Then, she hears the hoots from a gaggle of drag queens and feels him grabbing her, nearly toppling her over, and shoving his liquor-flavored tongue down her throat. She opens her eyes to see a blond woman in a pink dress run over to her. I'm not drunk at this point, just surprised. There's nothing sexual about any of this. He's picture perfect; I'm feeling self-consciously dowdy. The woman in the pink dress shoves a ring in my face and shrieks something about being his fiancée. It's over as quickly as it begins. I'm dancing again. He's disappeared. The audience: drooling (why couldn't it be me?) fags.

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A girl's got to be suspect when the guy everyone wants turns out to want her. I am ultra normal and not especially glamorous. He is a superman machine with a body molded from molten lava. I have cellulite and ingrown hairs and sweaty knees and dandruff. I have toe-nails that are rough and tear holes in my socks and pesky black hairs that sprout sporadically from otherwise blondish parts of my arm, split ends, acne, scars from a dog bite, and hairy nostrils. He has no tan lines, neatly trimmed nails, and my underwear in the front left pocket of his jeans.

I am the girl with the most cake.

We were safe. We used a condom. We attempted to be safe. The condom broke. "This has only happened to me once before," he said. "This happens to me all the time," I told him, confused.

The lavatory at the hotel was brightly lit, and I knew I looked like hell under the flourescents. He herded me into the handicapped stall and kissed me like he meant it. Eye contact, tender, probing, intense, devouring. I'd blush if I repeated what he said or what he did. I'd faint if I told you what I whispered or how I responded. The details are immaterial. It was sex and it was sexy and I'd never done it in a handicapped stall before.

The next day, I go to my doctor to request the "morning-after" pill. She's a 44-year-old virgin, a fact she repeats to me every time I have any concerns related to sexuality. "I had some strange bleeding once," she tells me, "so I went on The Pill for awhile. It's awful." I can't ask her why she doesn't fuck. Hearing that she's a virgin makes me feel like a gutter slut. "You're just more experienced," she says. "I've only seen it on video." She smiles. She's joking. Maybe she hasn't even seen a porno. She fills out the paperwork for the "morning-after" pill, which is really just some megadose of estrogen. You take three one day and three the next. She wants me to take a pregnancy test to see if I'm already pregnant. If I am, the pills would cause some heavy damage to the fetus. I'm not concerned. No fetus would make it out of my body alive, anyway. I wouldn't let it. "The soul would have to go back to the end of the line," the doctor says.

I blow off the pregnancy test and gulp the pills with a glass of water and a hit of Dramamine.

I vomit the entire next day.

Sometimes too much cake can make you really sick.

You can't shame or humiliate modern celebrities. What used to be called shame and humiliation is now called publicity. –P.J. O'Rourke

Stream of Celebrity Schopenhauering

By Vaginal Davis

Ms. Davis w/ Mr. Rufus Wainright

I'm so sick of celebrities. I'm sick of hearing about them and I'm even sick of being one.

The fact is I've been involved in the culture of celebrity since I was a little weenager. Growing up poor in the projects, I knew that celebrity was the only route available to me in escaping the ghetto. What were my choices? Become a wage slave, a drug dealer…or *A Celebrity.*

At the mere age of 14 I realized that I had to think internationally. I was already an Anglophile loving everything about Missy England, especially its slimy Limey boys with their pale bodies and thick butterscotch foreskins. Doing my research at the main library in downtown LA, I discovered that there were scholarships available to underprivileged children like myself to attend fancy boarding schools in Europe. I applied to one in the Queen Mumdom of merry old England, but they weren't having my dusky black self. To my chagrin I was accepted to a school in Switzerland, which was even better than the one in England, because Prince Albert of Monaco and Prince Edward went to this school as did a host of other European royalty. Of course all I was concerned with was that it was too far away from England, but I decided to go anyway figuring somehow I would make it to Great Britain even if I had to hitchhike across the English Channel.

There could have been no better school for a young FIT (Fag-in-Training). I was able to perform feats of fellatio on some of the most blue-blooded penises in Europe. It was also my first encounter with the international jet set – and boy are they ever kinkysauruses. When I eventually wound up in England it was during the heyday of punk rock. All of the boys in the bands had drag queen girlfriends, so I was much desired by the hottest of the hot. I wound up with Billy Idol while he was in Generation X, and let me tell you there was never a more beautiful boy than the young Mr. Idol. Johnny Rotten himself also fancied me, because he is a notorious dinge queen, but I thought he was ugly, and much preferred Steve Jones who I also diddled with on occasion, though we never did a full-out shag.

Of course, my becoming the drag girlfriend of a punk star affected my schooling and my scholarship and I was promptly sent down as they say, and had to return to LA, but not until I had properly wreaked havoc on some of the oldest houses of Europe.

My LA stint didn't last long, as I promptly applied for another scholarship and this time plopped myself down on the East Coast of the United States at the snooty prep palace – Choate in Wallingford, Connecticut. Choate used to be an all-boys school but it merged with Rosemary in 1972. The school was made famous by Edward Albee, who based his headmaster character in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* on the headmaster at Choate. The Choate Arts Center is also renowned because it was designed by the famous Japanese architect I.M. Pei, who also designed of the Pyramid at the Louvre.

The boys at this school come from some of the wealthiest families in this god-forsaken country, and let me tell you, rich peni tastes much better than poor peni. It was at Choate that I first met John John Kennedy Jr., and had the opportunity to swallow his Camelotty-flavored semen, which was *delicious.* We would meet at this area known as The Skeets – a wooded area where they would do skeet shooting. I became notorious for my antics in the woods and cornfields surrounding the campus. It was all very innocent and lovely.

All the cool people hung out at The Smoker, and since I had lived in Europe and gone out with punk stars I was very much embraced. Even though I didn't come from wealth or privilege, my personal style and eccentric ways made me very popular. I was always being recruited to go on liquor runs to New Haven where I could get booze from the Package store and take it back to the dorm in my old fashion knapsack. Since I was considered an arty type, we were known as Bleacher Creatures. This surely sounds ridiculous but you must remember this was over 20 years ago. Gosh, am I that old?

Choate was a virtual homo playground. The Hillhouse, the ratty old dorm where charity cases like me had to live, was a virtual bordello except I was such a retarded whore I forgot to charge. I was unceremoniously expelled when I became involved in a scandalous affair with Gloria Vanderbilt's oldest son who committed suicide over me. Talk about your Cruel Intentions, I guess I've done quite a few things that I'm not exactly proud of.

So before I continue, let me preface this by asking you not to pass along these items of information, they are solely for *Ben Is Dead* read-

[photo: Raul Vega Make-up: Mama Make-up]

Guest celebrity correspondent Ms. Vaginal Creme Davis.

What rage for fame attends both great and small! Better be damned than mentioned not at all! –John Wolcot ers ONLY and no one else, so I hope that I have made myself clear. I don't want to cause anyone any undue harm, so I'm trusting that you will all act responsibly.

* * * * *

Just because I'm a celebrity doesn't mean I'm better than anyone else. I may be better looking, taller, with a tighter pussy, firmer titties, and my feces hardly ever stinks, but that's no excuse to grovel in my very presence.

[photo: Chrome Chastain]

Ms. Davis brings much joy to lost-youth celebrities. Here shrimping Joshua Jackson of *Dawson's Creek,* who has fine-tasting feet.

ITEM #1) That is why I couldn't stand it when *Dawson's Creek* star James Van Der Beek and his boyfriend Scott Caan, son of James Caan, were trying to entice me for a lil' hot buttered threegy recently. Not that I couldn't get into mindless sex with these two young studkins, it's just that participating in threegys or fourgys for that matter is so passe, so mid-'90s – let them engage in that foolish behavior with Mr. Williamson. I gave their penises a half-assed chewing and fingered their steamy fresh boyholes for a second or two, but I just wasn't into it. I'm really cuckoo for uppercrust Caucasian cock, or "high snow" in the ghetto vernacular, and my new boy – foreign correspondent for ABC World News – more than fits that bill. We don't get to spend that much time with each other, because of our grueling schedules, but we love each other immensely and I really can't see myself spending too much sex time with anyone else, no matter how impressive their charms. We've had some difficult times, and lots of randy men have tried to come between us, namely: Brendan Fraser, star of the movies *Gods and Monsters* and *The Mummy*. But honey, there was no way that my boy would leave me for someone with doll hair implants, so Brendan went and married one of his hagathas, because he's so fixated on his Hollywood image, like those things really matter anymore. Everyone in Hollywoodland or as I like to call it, the Fairyland of Oz is scrambling, because the industry as they all know it, is going through some major shake-ups. Not just the movie industry but the recording industry as well. All entertainment entities are on the verge of crumbling, and boy will I be glad when it happens. The status quo can only endure so long. Pretty soon there won't be any Sony Pictures, or Paramount, or any of that crapiola.

ITEM #2) One man trying to sniff out my cootchee is Taylor, the cute drummer with the Foo Fighters. He actually left his girlfriend, actress Minnie Driver, in a demented effort to impress me. But I let him know immediately to go back to Minnie because she's a friend of mine and she has been through the wringer with one beau dumping her for someone else. And in her frail emotional state (she's on St. John's Wort, with a dash of crystal, NOT a good combination) she couldn't handle another big breakup and would wind up trying to commit suicide or some such nonsense. It's really hard being a glamorous skinny actress. The pressures are enormous. So I believe Taylor went back to her, but I'm not sure as I didn't want to subject myself to their drama. My friend Pat Ruthensmear who left the Foo Fighters to pursue god-knows-what told me that Taylor is madly obsessed with me. Believe you me, I'm not flattered by that. My days of seeing rock stars are over. I'm only interested in men who are lawyers and doctors, certainly no one involved in the tired entertainment industry.

ITEM #3) That shameless hussy, dirty Mariah Carey (honey, the woman *stinks!*) and Latin veinthrob Luis Miguel (both suffer from enflamed nippleitis) were having a romantic dinner at the trendy Le Deux Café in Hollywood. What Ms. Carey didn't know was that when her diminutive date excused himself to the ladies room, not only was he powdering his surgically reconfigured nose with super-sized amounts of cocaine, but he was busy chowing down on the Argentinian buttsticle of Le Deux server Matiniano Crozet, whose other job is lead singer of the Mariachi punk outfit Los Super Elegantes (which includes Bill Tutton of the Geraldine Fibbers). Who was serving whom? That is the question. When Luis stumbled back to the table, he and Mariah continued to bill and coo. She seemed to not notice his cheesy peni and lingus breath, but I was at the next table sitting with owner Michele Lamy and we all smelt it, and it made us swoo. All Mariah had to do was look down and she'd have seen the large stain on his Prada slacks.

ITEM #4) Muscle queen Hank Rollins and Mighty, Mighty, Mighty-Mighty-Mo, Madonna herself were lunching at Le Deux, which is becoming the LA version of Manhattan's Moomba (except the lunch and dinner menus are the same price). I just happened to be close by, being treated for lunch by Viacom honcho Richard B. Cooperstein, who was playing footsie with me under the table. I overheard Ms. Ciccone ask the spoken-word wunderkind if he would consent to becoming her new sperm donor. I guess lil' Lourdes needs a playmate. Henry graciously declined, explaining that his hot-headed Italian lover, Michael De Luca of New Line Cinema, wouldn't be too keen on that proposal. I think Michael would heartily approve, as he has been slurping up pretty hefty quantities of EFX-meister Chris Watt's Vassar-educated seminal emissions for quite some time. In fact, he's consumed so much slooge that he could give birth to 150 butt babies of his own. So much for the seven sisters, when you can have six tits.

ITEM #5) What about Robert Downey Jr.'s great revelation that he is a bicycle built for two. Over ten years ago I first scooped his mansex exploits in my *Fertile LaToyah Jackson* Magazine. Back then everyone thought I was crazy! What a difference a decade makes. What really would have been news is him talking about being a first-class sloppy bottom prone to major mud slides. And you know what? He is still a premature ejaculator.

ITEM #6) A true-blue bisexual who I have the utmost respect for is Brad Pitt, who got a massive thromboning from his current look-alike paramour, the boylactic Brad

Vag with current beau Anderson Cooper, son of Gloria Vanderbuilt.

[photo: Glee Brevard]

www.hsx.com = The Hollywood Stock Exchange

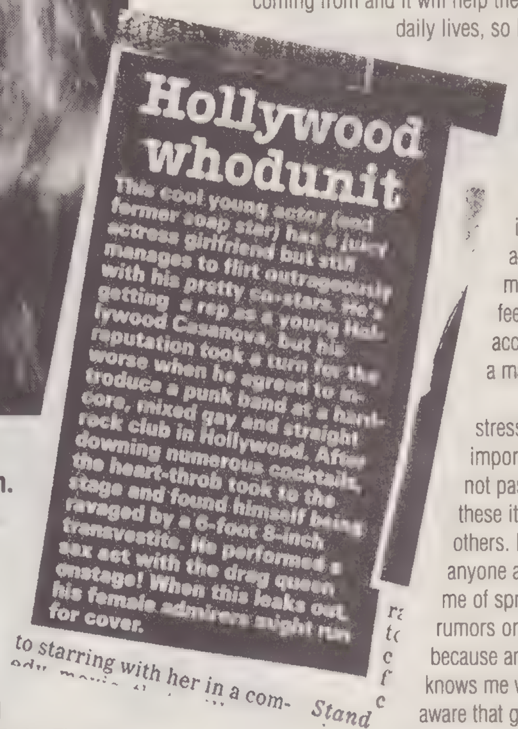
Rowe of that tired gay indie flick *Billy's Hollywood Screen Kiss*. Mr. Pitt's girlfriend Jenn Anniston doesn't join in on her love's plug-in editions, but gets all drippy and fidgety watching the merry antics of Brad plowing Brad.

ITEM #7) That beautiful CUTIE's cutie, Kim Gordon (Sonic Youth), who I worship and adore, along with her lanky, sexy, openly gay husband Thurston Moore and their lesbian baby daughter Coco, are the most progressive family on earth. Thuston's Chelsea muscle-puppy boyfriend Leo has been doing interpretive go-go dancing with the Less-is-Moore side noise band Foot and getting rave reviews. So sayeth Kim to her close pals, "I'm blessed with my daughter Coco, so Thurston's proclivities don't bother me in the least."

ITEM #8) Talk about being butch, well Mr. Yoko Ono and her new hubby that she's been secretly married to for over five years like to experiment in slinky ways with their favorite sex toy – a garlic press. Yoko's best friend, famed photog Helmut Newton, has even captured some of these slick sessions on film and Mary, I can't wait 'til the coffee table book comes out.

ITEM #9) Director Clive Barker and his dastardly dinge queen ways! Our man Clive is cuckoo for cocoa cock! And lots of it! He has a steady *jubas* buggerbuddy, but is constantly trawling on a nightly prowl for other Nubian delights. This hellraising director even approached me one night while I was in my *Hustler White* Buster Beauté boy drag. He didn't even recognize me for the queen that I am, and we've met on many occasions. I guess I'm a much better actor at being butch than I thought. So I wound up with him at his Bev Hills homo moderne crib, and before I know it my face is buried in my pillow and my racehorse arse is up high in the air, and Mr. Barker is dining on my garden salad. This man is an expert in the fine cuntinary art of analingus. I only wished I had douched beforehand as I was a bit dusky in that department. Englishmen are nasty, so it didn't matter. I fell asleep for a few hours, and when I woke up he was still doing the puppy chow.

Vag helps Ryan Phillipe...
with his reputation and his toe jam.
R: torn from the pages of *Star* magazine.



Hollywood whodunit

This cool young actor (and former soap star) has a juicy actress girlfriend but still manages to flirt outrageously with his pretty co-stars. He's getting a rep as a young Hollywood Casanova, but his reputation took a turn for the worse when he agreed to introduce a punk band at a hardcore, mixed gay and straight rock club in Hollywood. After downing numerous cocktails, the heart-throb took to the stage and found himself being ravaged by a 6-foot 8-inch transvestite. He performed a sex act with the drag queen onstage! When this leaks out, his female admirers might run for cover.

to starring with her in a com-

Stand

ITEM #10) Scintillating blondtress Gwyneth Paltrow and I would up having a lil' bit of a lesbianic fling while I was in New York. I feel really bad about it, because she was technically still going out with actor Ben Affleck, who we were unawares had already cheated on her…with his younger brother Casey Affleck. It's the neutered camel that finally led to their eventual break-off. Now Casey's ex, Jonathan Taylor Thomas, late of TV's *Home Improvement* series, is really ticked by the brotherly-love dating. Personally I feel that it is not my place to judge Ben & Casey's relationship. Let he or she cast the first Sharon Stone. What I neglected to mention is that while I was involved with Gwyn, I was also having an affair with her homosexy younger brother Jake, who has also been with Casey. And what nobody is aware of is that back in my younger days in the late '70s, I had a brief tryst with Bruce Paltrow, who is Gwyn and Jake's father. It happened while he was producing the TV drama *The White Shadow* and was having marital woes with his wife Blythe Danner (an excellent actress – she never found out about her husband's lil' indiscretion with me, and it's been so long there is no need for her to ever know). I was going out at the time with *White Shadow* star Timothy Van Patten and somehow I wound up with Bruce. If all this is confusing to you, imagine what it is to me.

[photo: Chrome Chastain]

Martiniano Crozet of Los Super Elegantes,
lover of pop throp Luis Miguel.

My sweet lord, I can't believe how honest and forthcoming I've been. Something still nags at me that I should not open myself up like this, but I feel that the people who will read this will understand where I'm coming from and it will help them in their daily lives, so I know I'm doing something that will benefit mankind in the end, and that makes me feel like I've accomplished a major good. I must stress the importance of not passing on these items to others. I don't want anyone accusing me of spreading rumors or gossiping, because anyone who knows me well is fully aware that gossip is something I absolutely abhor. No one has the right to pry into the private affairs of others, and it's a sin against god to become involved in other people's business. So please keep that in mind and you will be accomplishing a major good too.

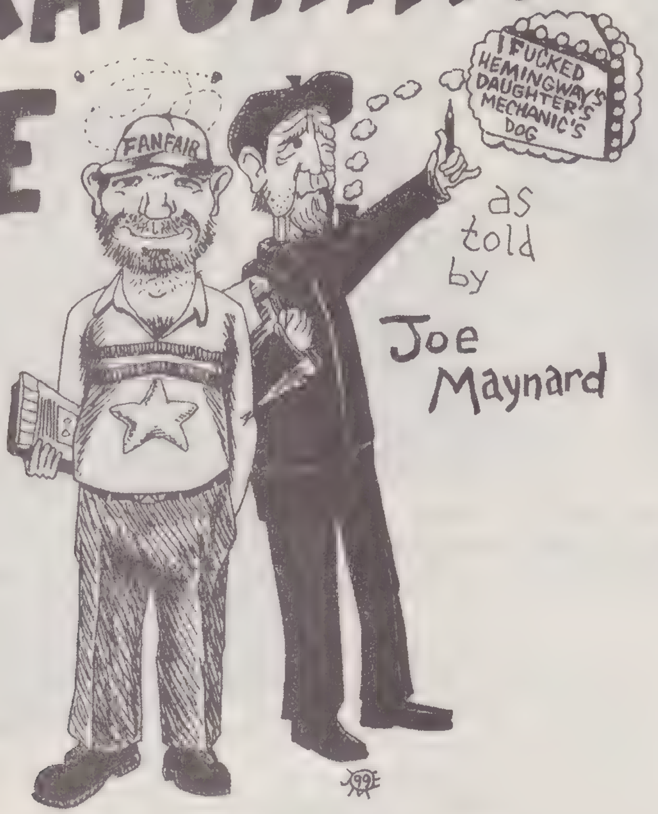
* * * * *

For nearly two decades Vaginal Davis has been a cultural raconteur as writer, musician/film maker/ conceptual artist, and social critic. She is known for her subversive work in almost every known medium. Her bands, !Cholita! The female Menudo, PME whose hit CD Too White To Be Angry *was produced by Steve Albini, and black fag with Beck's mom, Bibbe Hansen, are legendary conceptual projects that are unlike anything out on the music scene. For four years Ms. Davis has hosted Club Sucker in Silverlake at The Garage, a punk rock and performance venue where Angela Davis and white supremacy are all channeled under the same roof. Go see her perform while she's still allowed to live in this country. Check out her web sites at: www.io.com/~larrybob/vagshows.html or http://www.ripco.com/~homocore/vcd.html*

We like to know the weaknesses of eminent persons; it consoles us for our inferiority. –Madame de Lambert

SCRATCHING FAME

as told by Joe Maynard


FANFAIR
I FUCKED HEMINGWAY'S DAUGHTER'S MECHANIC'S DOG

I was in that early-20s-just-out-of-art-school phase, hitchhiking around the country for the past couple years, crashing on different sofas of friends and family. But New York was my base, and I missed my friends, and my good friend Ofelia's living-room sofa in her West Side Railroad flat was in my price range: Pay what you wish.

"There's just one thing I should warn you about," she said when I moved in, "This homeless guy, Frank. I let him sleep over sometimes."

Frank wasn't merely homeless. He wasn't like me, slacker homeless. Nor was he like drug-addict, alcoholic or crazy homeless. Well, "yes" on crazy, but a particular ilk. Frank was part of a special cult of obsessive star-worshipers. Behind any *Cats, Chorus Line* or *Rent* hangs a tarnished curtain of obsessive fans. Like the baroque details that adorn the grand facades of Broadway theaters, Frank's gang lined the backdoors facing the alleys, slept in clusters behind dumpsters, greeted the stars upon their arrival and departure, never doubting that they and the stars were one, just different walls of the same theater.

What they lacked in sanity, Frank's peers made up for with colorful nicknames. Frank's was "the mouse," a nickname bestowed upon him by annoyed security guards, no doubt, because he had the uncanny ability to sneak in virtually anywhere. Another guy's nickname was "The Hat" simply because he always wore one. The Hat took photos of stars – mostly emerging from their dressing rooms after performances. He probably could have made a decent living as a professional paparazzi, but the sort of organizational skill it would require to maintain a business would be too many steps away from the purity and asceticism in which true star-worshipers live.

"He's my friend – my close, personal friend," Frank would boast in reference to Dick Cavett or whoever. But if everyone Frank said was his close personal friend was his close personal friend, he'd probably reside in a posh Park Avenue penthouse, not the Saint Francis Xavier shelter for the homeless, where Ofelia had been volunteering for the past year.

"He collects autographs," Ofelia told me in deadpan understatement. According to Frank, his parents' attic in Nashville was chock full of his collection, which included a half-dozen Andy Warhol autographed soup cans, a Charlie Daniels cowboy hat autographed on the inner headband, an egg of Leggs pantyhose bearing the signature of – who was it? – Brigitte Bardot or someone, an Edie Gourmet-autographed Edie's Gormet Ice Cream lid, a signed Tony Randall handkerchief, and of course, an autograph album containing a myriad of celebrity scrawls, most of whom were Frank's close personal friends.

Over the next few weeks, more and more Frank stories filtered in. "I couldn't believe it!" Ofelia said slapping herself on the forehead one day after work, "One minute I'm eating a tuna-melt, and the next minute this crazy guy is dragging me out to the sidewalk on 56th and 6th for no apparent reason! Just when I'm ready to say, 'Frank! What in God's name are you doing?' I'm face to face with Henny Youngman."

A few months before I moved in, Frank had told Ofelia he had both lung cancer and emphysema, so she took him down to the Social Security office to put him on SSI. Naturally, the social worker took one look at Frank and the lights in her head flashed: "Nut...Nut...Nut." They put him through a series of tests...Nut tests. Afterwards, when Frank showed up at the shelter, they'd tease him, saying, "Study for your test, Frank?" Eventually, he answered, "Passed with flying colors!"

SSI gave him about $3000 in arrarage payments, plus a stipend of like $1000 a month. With the three Gs Frank bought a bunch of electronic equipment. He'd been developing this reverb gizmo for recording vocals for years during his alleged career as a country-western singer-songwriter. The plan was: Once he got the patent, he'd be a millionaire.

Since Ofelia was an ultra-kind Catholic chick with a guilt complex, she was one of the few people in the world Frank could call to – uh – call. He called roughly a half-dozen times a day. As a favor I often picked up the phone in order to "screen the Frank" but it wound up taking five to ten minutes to end each conversation, if you can call them that. "...Not sure where she went, Frank...No, I don't think it's a good idea to come over and wait for her...Sure, I'll leave a message...Really? You met Mickey Mantle? And Reggie Jackson, too?...No, I don't know what kind of golf clubs Larry Bud Melman uses ...Who gave you a ride in their limo?" My guess is that the size of Frank's daily roster of celebrity names coincided with the amount of spare change he had to feed into the payphone. But I never doubted they were real encounters – real uncomfortable encounters – and sooner or later I knew I'd be around Frank and, well...

One morning I awoke to find Frank crashed on the living room floor. I guess my shuffling around in the kitchen for coffee woke him up, and he joined me.

"How ya doin'?" he asked with uncommon enthusiasm for a guy who just spent the night on a hard wood floor.

"OK." I mumbled. "Want coffee?"

"Sure." He scratched his head and cleared his throat while I measured and poured the ingredients into the coffee maker.

"Workin' today?" he asked, sniffing his snot loudly into his throat and making hideous gargling noises.

"No." I shuffled around the kitchen doing the coffee, making toast, while Frank paced and snapped his fingers and clapped his hands

On Juries of One's Peers: It was not my class of people. There was not a producer, a press agent, a director, an actor. –Zsa Zsa Gabor, talking about the jury that convicted her of slapping a Beverly Hills police officer together the way people often do when they're idly passing time. He seemed distracted about something. Soon I found myself silently sipping and sitting across the table from this...this...this smelly man! Jeez! We smiled awkwardly at each other. Sipped. His eye twitched. Nervous ticks, I guessed. I sipped again. He cocked his head back and forth like he was doing calisthenics, but I had the feeling he was trying to camouflauge the nervous ticks.

"Hey," he said breaking the stinky silence, "thanks for letting me crash here."

"Sure," I shrugged, even though it wasn't me who let him stay.

"Whatchya doin' later?" he asked.

"Oh," I said trying unsuccessfully to conjure a picture of anything. "I guess I'm not doing anything."

"How 'bout a Broadway play?" Frank beamed.

"You buyin'?"

"My very good, close personal friend, Anne Meara, is in a play called *American Standard*," Frank proclaimed. "What's more is she's performing the part of a street lady – a street lady based on my friend Maggie."

Shy and without a nickname, Maggie lived in a cardboard box around 44th Street. She had classic street-lady idiosyncrasies, like compulsive knitting, talking to herself, and scratching, which Ms. Meara fastidiously studied in preparation for her part over dozens of dinners with Frank and Maggie. A few times, she had them over to her apartment, but for the most part, they met at a midtown restaurant. The meetings became so frequent that she eventually gave them her account card with the restaurant so they could eat in case she was running late, or eat there whenever they wanted.

"In fact," Frank told me, rubbing the coffee from his mustache and beard with the heel of his hand, "That's how I met my girlfriend."

"Girlfriend?" I said, inhaling to double-check my senses.

"Yeah," he smiled, "She's a singer like me – only from Ireland."

Apparently, she was a lot like Frank – another flakey star-worshipper. I never met her, but Ofelia told me they were equally able to impress each other with their brushes with fame. She came to the Big Apple hoping to become a star but wound up in the underbelly of the street where she met Frank, who invited her to swap lists of "Close Personal Friends" over coffee purchased with Anne Meara's account card. Voilá: Love.

I don't usually go to Broadway plays, partly because they're so damn expensive, and partly because of that annoying Broadway aura – phoney, too many lights, and of course, starry-eyed fans. But with Frank's kind offer of free tickets, who could refuse? Also, I had to admit, I was getting pretty curious about Frank's strange star-studded life, and was somewhat honored to be initiated into his eccentric fraternity. Frank arranged two tickets for me. Ofelia couldn't make it that day, so I called my close personal friend Gina, who worked around the corner from the theater at Gotham Bookmart.

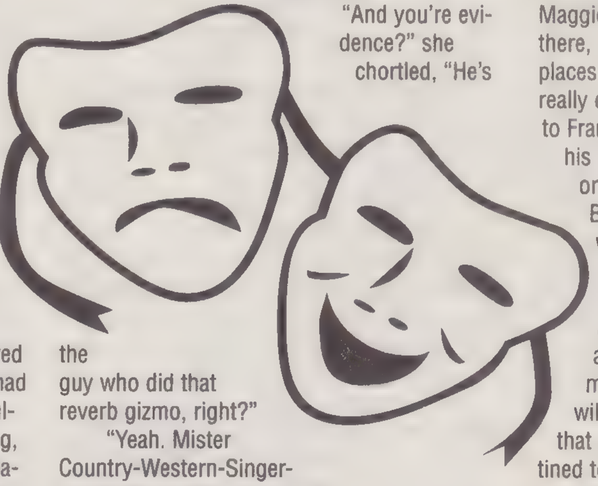
"What's the play about?" she asked between customers.

"Homelessness," I said, "But get this: We got tickets from this funny homeless guy, Frank. You gotta meet him."

"Ten eighty-three, sir." she said over a ringing cash register. "Isn't this the guy who's always bugging Ofelia?"

"Well, yeah – " I stammered, "But you aren't exactly one to shy away from kooks."

"And you're evidence?" she chortled, "He's the guy who did that reverb gizmo, right?"



"Yeah. Mister Country-Western-Singer-Songwriter." "What ever happened?" she asked, slamming the register shut, "Don't tell me he's a millionaire, now?"

"You'll just have to ask him."

"Let me see if I can take off."

"It's a bookstore, Gina!"

"Oh, yeah."

We met Frank and one of Frank's close personal friends who wasn't a celebrity, an older man named Martin, in front of the theater. We passed under the baroque cupids, nymphs, and satyrs that hovered over the entrance, and went down the red carpet to the box-office window. Sure enough, there were four tickets waiting for Frank. Frank handed each of us our free $50 ticket. "Courtesy of Anne," he proudly added. We walked into the auditorium to find we had ideal seats on the lower level, center isle, not too far to the front or back.

Now came the matter of who would sit next to Frank. I knew for a fact that Frank had showered that morning, but the amazing thing about homeless people is how they can shower and then smell like stinky French cheese right after. Frank fell squarely into that catagory. There was no way I could subject Gina to sitting next to him for two hours, so I valiantly endured the stinky seat. At first, he triggered my gag reflex, but after a while, my repulsion turned to fascination. Frank's smell was the trademark of an entire subculture; the patchouli of the homeless. Something to let you know this wasn't some Julliard student doing their method exercises, this was a bona-fide stinky tramp, and how often in this house of mirrors of a civilization we live in do you actually run into the real thing?

The play was about some bourgeois Manhattanites inviting this homeless woman, played by Anne Meara, to their beach house on Fire Island. During the course of the play, her idiosyncratic habits and, shall we say, rustic manners caused them to lose their patience and acknowledge over their middle-class guilt that they truly didn't like her. Clearly, their middle class "charity" meant less to her than a walk to the bodega for a bag of chips.

Throughout the performance, Frank bellowed laughs of recognition, saying, "Just like Maggie...Just like Maggie." I laughed here and there, grew misty-eyed in a couple other places, but I was a little too self-conscious to really enjoy it. After all, there I was, sitting next to Frank in a seat he arranged for me, watching his lifestyle being exploited on stage for me, or us, or whatever the demographic of a Broadway audience may be. Either Frank wasn't aware of or offended by the overall framework of the play, or he wholeheartedly agreed with it. I felt guilty about my pity for Frank, guilty about accepting his charity, even guilty about my guilt. The whole thing gave me the willies, especially when it became apparent that a street person was all Maggie was destined to be.

After the show, Frank led us down the back alley to the dressing room door to meet Ms. Meara. Ofelia had told me about the time Frank took her to a play starring Dick Cavett, then afterwards boldly walked her to the backstage area, found Mr. Cavett, shook his hand and said, "Mr. Cavett, I'd like for you to meet my good friend Ofelia. Ofelia, my good friend Dick Cavett." The star was gracious enough with his "Pleased to meet you," but something told her that should chance ever bring them in proximity again, she would be someone he'd avoid.

I was certain Ms. Meara would have the same look of horror that Mr. Cavett no doubt had, but she seemed friendly and approachable, like a kind aunt from the Bronx. Frank proudly made the round of introductions. Ms. Meara complimented Frank on his clothes, told Martin it was good to see him again, and asked Gina and I what we thought of the play. If truth be told, I found it hard to identify with any of the characters in the play. The "normals" were too rich and the tramp was too nutty. I told her that the homeless lady felt "real."

"Absolutely!" Frank said, nodding his head, "You played Maggie to a tee!" But it was much more than a polite hello and a congratulations that I wanted to exchange with the star. I wanted to know what it felt like to be on her side of the fan-star equation. Unfortunately, another part of the equation was that I was with Frank and she was the celebrity, and

Sometimes [they] don't smell so good, so love can have no nose. –Tammy Faye Bakker, preaching about the poor.

therefore, a polite hello would be the extent of our encounter.

Suddenly the excitement was over. The celebrity disappeared behind a metal door and the four of us stood looking at each other. The sounds of the street echoed down the alley and I felt all too aware of Frank's excitement. This celebrity encounter was his fuel, his drug, his hooch, his love. While the event seemed to be winding down for me, today's event might keep Frank loaded for weeks to come.

"Thanks, Frank," Gina said walking away from the dressing-room door. "Yeah," I said, trying to sum up the weird stuff in my head. "Thanks."

We found a Hell's Kitchen watering hole with pints of Bud for less than a token, and gathered our beers around a tall two-foot diameter drink table with the requisite 1962 vintage red vinyl and chrome barstools. I introduced Gina and Frank. I could tell Gina was a bit put off by Frank's aroma as she discreetly asked for a napkin from the bar, returning to sit between Martin and me rather than Frank and me.

Martin was a piece of work: Roughly 70 years of age, a tall, thin, old-school bohemian who dressed completely in black, save a paisley scarf he tucked into his collar, and an impressive bedhead of thick, white hair. At first glance, he seemed like a very hip old cat, like I'd like to be when I'm that age.

"So what do you do?" Gina sheepishly asked Martin. Ofelia had clued me in that Martin was an obsessive book collector. Quelle surprise! Apparently, his Hell's Kitchen studio apartment, which he formerly used as a painting studio, was so chock full of books that when Frank crashed at his place it was necessary to carry a couple piles of the less-valuable books into the hallway in order to clear a space for Frank's body.

"I'm a book collector," Martin told Gina in a quasi-British accent, "Mostly modern literature, but a few antiquarian books as well."

"Oh yeah?" Gina said with about as much enthusiasm as someone folding laundry, "I work at a bookstore."

"Which one?"

"Gotham Bookmart."

As luck would have it, Gotham was one of Martin's favorite places. They have a large stock of Edward Gorey first editions and prints, and Martin, an illustrator during his working years, had "an enormous appreciation for Edward's work."

Although I never before thought of the Gotham Bookmart as anything more than a dust-trap where you could find out-of-print curiosities that the rest of the world no longer held interest in, Martin made me feel like I should embark upon the place as if it were a star-studded safari.

Strangely eager to know the details of Gina's humble existence, he began questioning innocuously enough, "How do you like working at Gotham?"

"It's a job."

"How long have you been there?" That's when I noticed something about his eyes appeared a bit too bright. They popped out, lingered on Gina's words a bit more heavily than seemed healthy, as if her answers might supply a crucial piece of immortal history. All she said was that when she was fresh out of college, jobless and living in what was then the bombed-out East Village, sheer desperation brought her to work there, but who knows what happened to the words once Martin processed them.

Obviously, Martin knew more about Gotham Bookmart than Gina, reciting his knowledge as if it brought him that much closer to immortality of his own. He rattled off a list of famous people he'd known, Miller, Barnes, whoever, claiming to have been friends or lovers with Lucien Freud (Sigmund's painter son), and Francis Bacon (the son's more famous painter-lover).

The saddest part was that his closest claim to fame was almost doing the dust jacket of a Hemingway novel. He'd done several preliminary sketches and received a partial payment of $80 – "an enormous sum for that time," he proclaimed in what I finally realized was a completely phoney British accent. Unfortunately, he was invited to lunch with, we'll say Hemingway and Tennessee Williams, where they informed him that another artist had ideas more in tune with their way of thinking. Martin was devastated. But he lived. Lived to tell us one damp evening after a dramatic Broadway play in which Anne Meara played the part of a homeless lady who was a close personal friend of his close personal friend. So that was it: Martin was an arty Frank.

"Ask Frank about the reverb machine," Gina said, nudging my rib, now uncomfortable with Martin's attention.

"Frank," I said, "how's that invention going?" "I shopped it around some of the Nashville studios down at Fan Fair," Frank said. Then leaning over the table as if telling a great secret, he whispered, "And guess who I met?"

"No telling–"

"Barbara Mandrell."

Apparently they became close personal friends and she invited him to the studio with his reverb gizmo.

"Barbara loved it!" he beamed.

"She bought the reverb machine?" Gina asked. "Nah, but I cut a record with her!" He pulled out a portable tape player – not a boom box, but the first portables they came out with in the '70s with a single 3" speaker and chrome buttons on one end by the handle. He depressed the play button, and there was indeed a voice coming from the box. Whether it was Frank was debatable. There was a male voice. There were also slide guitars and a snare drum. Other than that, it could have been any man in the world. The sound quality was too dim – at least in the atmosphere of a bar – to decipher either a tune or lyrics.

"That's me," Frank said proudly, "I wrote that song." "Go Frank," Gina said, sliding her glasses up her nose to avoid laughing. "Yeah, Barbara thought it was pretty good, too." "You played it for Barbara?"

"Cut it at her studio."

His eyes twinkled in a strangely euphoric but absent way. The thought occurred to me that even if Frank did make a recording at Barbara Mandrell's studio, he may not even remember or care about the actual performance. The important thing was, he became close personal friends with yet another star.

Ah...who knows? Maybe Frank's the greatest country songwriter on the planet. I saw Frank a few times after that, but soon I moved out of Ofelia's place and lost contact with him. I never saw a record of "Frank Sings the Blues," either. But soon after, George Jones came out with an album that made me wonder. On one song, the narrator's sweetheart leaves him, so he cracks open a gift decanter of Jim Beam whisky shaped like a bust of Elvis Presley. He drinks from a cup shaped like the head of Fred Flintstone. Eventually he empties the Elvis decanter. The chorus is "Yabba-dabba-doo, the King is gone, and so are you." Strangely enough, examining the photo of George on the cover, I couldn't help thinking he looked and dressed a lot like Frank. Even the obsession with stars – albeit cartoon or dead stars – reminded me of Frank. You never know. Maybe if I scratch the cover it will smell like French cheese.

* * * * *

NY-based writer Joe Maynard has been sending Darby his stories for at least five years. He's a prime example of what happens when talent is mixed with patience and persistence.

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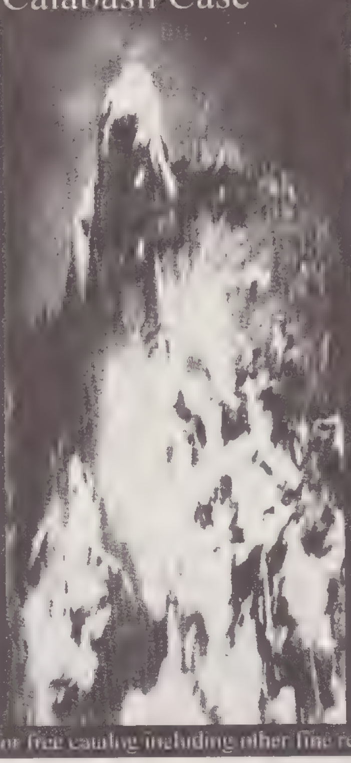

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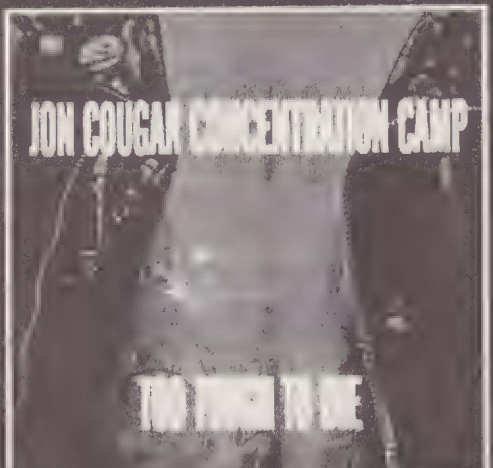
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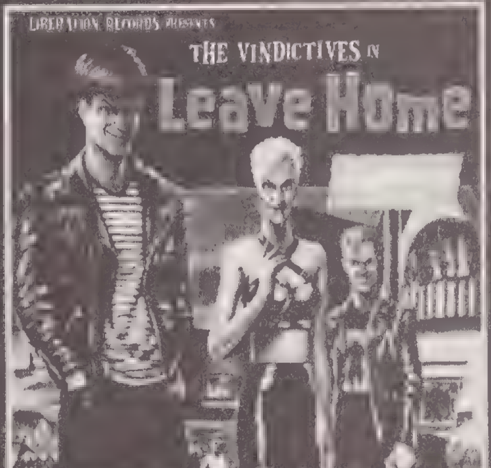
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[boob reviews]

Lorraine had a great idea. It would cut down on time, make this labor of pain a little easier, *and* it went with the theme: **FAME IS FLEETING CASTING-COUCH CELEBRITY RECORD REVIEWS, SUPERFICIALLY JUDGED ON A NAME-DROPPING ONE-SONG-WONDER BASIS.** So here Lorraine and her friends review just one song (noted in quotations) from select celebrity-inferring CDs, while me and my friends review the whole CD (one song would be too easy!), regardless of whether any of it has anything to do with celebrity or not. I know you don't care anyway, I'm just letting the bands and record companies know. xo

400 BLOWS *[self-titled]* (Total Annihilation) – Heavy speed-demon metal. They were asked to do the music for some new wrestling show, so when the star walks out, this three-piece (no bass) will be blasting. Here, I asked a more apropos 400 Blow specialist Ms. Vaginal Davis (they got nekid with her during their interview…drunk) for her opinion: "What can I say about the 400 Blows: Skot the leader needs to lay off the booze and get on medication – Thorazine or Lithium. Mega doses. Christian on guitar: stay henpecked to Oriental girlfriend, because life in the homosexual underworld will completely destroy you." Oh, that's all we got before Vag's jetset flight took off and we were disconnected. [darby]

NINETY-NINE *767* (Endearing) – Simple guitar melodies, dirty at times, works well with the use of unusual instruments: xylophone, glockenspiel, and vibraphone to name only three. If the late Clara Rockmore was Popeye, these devices would snore like his three nephews! [m&g]

ANTON BARBEAU *Antology Vol. 1* (Lost Arts) – LPs used to keep the number of songs per album at a minimum. CDs have allowed people like Anton to include 17 songs on one CD, and we're not talking Minutemen-length either. I put this on, left the room, made dinner, ate dinner, washed the dishes, came back. We're only on song 13, and it sounds just like it did when I left. Kinda modern whiny Gary Numan psychedelic pop/folk rock. Oh, I'm sick of analogies. Enjoy song one and go make dinner. [darby]

BICYCLE (Spoke Productions) – I tried unsuccessfully to pitch this band to some bigger mags. I never listened to their music, just liked their gimmick. I wanted to tour with them, because they tour on bicycle. I've hung on to their two CDs for a few years. The last one said they were leaving without label support to circumvent the U.S. on their latest bike tour. Finally listening to them today, my last CD to review. It's great hiphop folk – mostly about bicycling, actually, but that didn't really bother me. I could listen to this riding my bicycle far and away, miles from home. I hope they read this and take me on their next tour. (Bicycle uses Raleigh Bikes and BOB trailers exclusively.) [darby]

BLONDIE *No Exit* – How do the former new-wave Kings and Queen weather over time? Do they have a clue about music today? They tried awful hard to show they do, but misguided stabs at nearly every genre of music reeks of grasping at straws. What we have here is an attempt at channeling Siouxsie Sioux through a ska band ("Screaming Skin"), watered down house/techno ("Forgive and Forget"), a shitty rap/metal hybrid ("No Exit") featuring has-been Coolio, some Billie Holiday-type thing ("Boom Boom"). Get the picture? Believe it or not, the best song on this is their stab at country ("The Dream's Lost On Me"). There's also a smattering of new-wavish Blondie #'s that – while not appalling – aren't really that interesting, either. The only thing really appealing about this is Debbie's voice, which hasn't faded a bit – the band should pack it in and let Debbie do standards in Vegas. [evan]

BOBBY CONN *Rise Up* (Truckstop/Atavistic) – This band opened for Chokebore one lucky night. What fun. Can they be famous? Hope so. I wish they'd reshoot *Velvet Goldmine* with these characters as the leads. They sent me this but in my very rare splurge (maybe I buy one CD a year) I bought it because I wasn't sure I hadn't already returned it without listening. That old abused saying "It's all good," well it fits here. See them live. [darby]

BOLIDES *Progress Through Mutation* (spareroom-recordingcenter) – Garage surf noise with genetic lab analysis. These science boyz can chemically create a celebrity in a petri dish from DNA sloughed off. **CERTAIN GENERAL** *Signals from the Source* (CBGB) God is the celebrity with the best publicist, and I think perhaps that's what Certain General had in mind with their song "Hello My God." I mean, writing a song about the lead character in that ol' Christian fairy tale, the Bible, is bound to get you some props from somebody, but not this guy. The sound of the band is very '80s, with some good surf-guitar sounds, but it's held down by the goth-gloom Peter Murphy singing. If you like that D.R. stuff, you might get into it, but alas, I personally have put away my eyeliner forever and just don't get around to wearing all my old brooches anymore. This disc comes from CBGB, a club best known for T-shirts worn by members of Guns 'n' Roses and for allegedly being the birthplace of NY punk. Perhaps CBGB should stick to its guns and just book shows. [jack]

BRIAN JONESTOWN MASSACRE *Strung Out In Heaven* (TVT) "Got My Eye on You" I know it's cheating to keep skipping tracks 'til I found one I liked, but I really wanted to like this band because they have a really good name... It's just that I don't like slow music whatsoever, and while they weren't so dreamy as to put me to sleep, it was a little softer than what one would expect from a band with "massacre" in the title. However, on a celebrity note, I did like this song (the most upbeat of the album), which is coincidentally one of the three written by the Jonestown member named "Matt Hollywood." [Lo]

BRIGHT EYES *Letting Off the Happiness* (Saddle Creek) – "A Poetic Retelling of an Unfortunate Seduction" – so even though the cover was plenty starbursty, the song experience was unfortunate. [Lo]

BUGSKULL *Distracted Snowflake V.II* (Scratch) – Cowboy lullaby electronica. Some noise. I like "Trans Am"; I like "Magoo". And now I like "Bugskull". I'll keep it in the background while I do some space cleaning. [darby]

BUTTHOLE SURFERS *Sequenced and Mastered* (Capitol) – Not nearly as dismal as the last few offerings from my favorite bands. They're still coming from strange places and presenting their vision of god-knows-what to the public. I personally think all their good ideas were used up by the time they did "Hairway to Steven". [evan]

THE CENTIMETERS *Facts of Destiny* (Win) – Heavy male and operatic-weird female voices laid over noisy quirky sounds that run from Halloween to new wave. I like them better live – which may only mean they do good live shows. When the electronics broke down at the Fold one fateful night, Nora broke out into a solo version of "Desert Yodel" that could bring any house down. Favorites: the ambient "Thousand Eyes" and the eerie ethereal fucked-up skit "Friends on Earth". Actually my special favorite bonus is Nora's creepy sci-fi self-illustrated "Finger People" story. When the Centimeters go on summer vacation she could write children's books and successfully take over where Roald Dahl left off. Also look for their two other CDs (and the perfection in song "African Paper") on Precision Optics. [darby]

THE CHICKEN HAWKS *Siouxicide City* (RAFR) – "High Profile" If this band was the opener on a tough-girl-singer garage rock-a-thon bill, I'd make an effort not to arrive fashionably late. [Lo]

CINERAMA *Va Va Voom* (spinART) – Consists of a well-produced and orchestrated symphony which accompanies a Brit vocal, reminiscent of Ian McCulloch or Captain Sensible (depending on your background). Was not *Barefoot in the Park*, a film which starred two delectable at the time and now trés rich CELEBRITIES Jane Fonda and Robert Redford. Anyway, Cinerama also does French vocals…which may be sexy or may make you gag (depending on your background). All that and a ditty about love or lust for an "Au Pair". Fran Drescher nanny nanny! na hah hah hah hah hah! (with a nose plug on). [m&g]

CORDELIA'S DAD *Spine* (Appleseed) – "Three Babes" Poor Cordelia, I'd be so embarrassed I'd want to crawl under a rock and cringe myself to death if my dad went around whining a cappella like he was a Renaissance Faire balladeer (I'm picturing a poufy pieman hat and velvet knickers) for all the world to hear. [Lo]

CREAM ABDUL BABAR *[self-titled]* – Angry guy-metal à la Korn. As if that weren't bad enough, they use that lame Bad Billys skull and crossbone as a logo. (Who Cares?) [jack]

DAS KLOWN *Antidote* (Skunk) – "Sellout" Well, they get points for writing lyrics about peeing in a cup…I think high-school punks might like this, but it's been a long time since I was a high schooler or a punk rocker. [Lo]

DOPPLEGANGER *Meet Your Evil Twin* (Radio Mafia) – "Insane Tonight" There really were good things to evolve from the goth/glam-rock scene of the mid-'80s – not judging from this song, but really there were! [Lo]

DRAGONS *Cheers to Me* (Junk) – I've never heard the Dragons before. I've heard of 'em – even been to shows they played but always missed them and didn't really seem to care one way or the other I guess. Seems that there's so many so-called "scenes" going on these days that Rock and Roll just kinda slipped through the cracks. Those of you over the age of 25 (I'm being kind) probably don't need reminding that there's nothing more punk than those old Cheap Trick records you've got stashed somewhere. The Dragons are a Rock and Roll band with a nod to old-school sensibilities (or lack thereof) and nicely rounded aging-teen-idol type vocals. Yes, they do tend to revel in all things deemed inappropriate since the '70s, including a ballad-type thing or two. If the mere mention of the word "ballad" scares you off, you can seek solace in the fact that they all have pretty decent haircuts. What more do you want? [Marydeath]

DREAM CHILD *Reaching the Golden Gates* (Metal Blade) – Imagine if you will: the music is stock metal, the singing is like something out of a Broadway musical, the lyrics dorky, rhyming, earnest. The mix, astounding. Something is definitely wrong here. The answer: the dudes of Dream Child are French. Go figure. [lisa aa]

DURA-DELINQUENT *Damn Everything But* (Echostatic) – Sleazy rebel rhythm and blues à la Black Crowes (easily mistaken as cult celebrities Heckel and Jeckel) squawk to tunes titled "The Hollywood Diet". [m&g]

DYLAN GROUP *Re-Interpreted* (Bubble Core) – I have no idea what these songs originally sounded like, but the remixes on this disc are stellar examples of what talented folk can do with a little raw material. Lots and lots of vibraphone (which seems to be their main instrument) and no goddamn superstar "vocalists" fucking it up. [evan]

DYSTOPIA ONE *The Buscemi Tapes* (None of the Above) – I really wanted to like this band. A band that writes whole, adoring epics on the merits of Steve Buscemi can start a fanclub (or even a cult) that I would gladly join, as the object of their devotion is my secret geek-love celebrity desire (OK, right after Crispin). I guess they have a bit of a lo-fi Devo thing going for them, but the only thing really keeping this disc

Record Reviews by Evan Mack, Lorraine Mahru, Jack Often, Brian Doherty, Darby, Lisa AA, Mary Death, Epcott Fitzgerald, Shirley Kurata, Eberhard Huhn, M&G

from the "sell" stack is the nice collage of Steve on the inside jacket. [Lo]

EARTHLINGS *[self-titled]* (Crippled Dick Hot Wax) – This sort of "All-Star" cast record was hyped as groundbreaking and claiming all sorts of things, few of which it delivers. It's just so mediocre and off the mark that I couldn't listen to the whole thing. There's a world of great music out there; this isn't part of it. [evan]

EVERLAST *Whitey Ford Sings the Blues* (Tommy Boy) – There isn't much need for a review of this disc, in,that you can hear the singles every day in constant rotation on every "alternative" or "modern rock" radio station – sometimes, in fact, on two stations at once. Nothing I say is going to help or hurt sales on this album, so make up your own goddamn mind. Anyway, Whitey Ford was a baseball player back in the day, and my first glove was his signature model. I'll never forget fisting my ex-girlfriend with that mitt, or the hospital ride/operation to remove it. [jack]

EVERREADY *Festavus for the Restavus* (Cool Guy) – "Beach Banquet Bingo" is a song dedicated to that goddamn musketeer, Annette Funicello, and her all-star pop-punk band the "Been-done-too-many-times-before-why-do-they-keep-mailing-me-this-generic-crap-to-review-sextet." This album is already in the used bin (a nearby dumpster). [jack]

FALSIES *[self-titled]* (espo) – "Rock and Roll Dream" Cute '50s chick bubblegum-pink soda-fountain rockabilly. Sounds kinda like a female Elvis impersonator. [Lo]

FAMOUS MONSTERS *In the Night* (Bong Load) – "When I Grow Up" This is one of my new top five favorite bands. Three super villainesque girls in sparkly monster outfits with matching wigs who got that spooky tremolo thing down pat. So highly marketable an image, it brings a tear to my eye. [Lo]

FILM STAR *Tranquil Eyes* (Super Cottonmouth) – "Sorry Ma" Testimony that Classic Rock Lives! Or is Joe Walsh still breathing? [m&g]

FONDA *Music For Beginners* (Top Quality) – "Phil Famous" This should be a hit with the Brit/indie pop scene if it isn't already. [Lo]

GERT WILDEN & ORCHESTRA *Schoolgirl Report* (Crippled Dick Hot Wax) – The latest sensation of jaded fuck-record collectors: soundtracks to old porn movies, in this case German ones from the '70s. The music does weirdo facsimiles of blues-rock, Mystic Moods, biker freakouts, soul/funk workouts (barely breaking a sweat). It's all contrived, and suitably mesmerizing when listened to over and over. Booklet comes with attractive shots from the porn movies being soundtracked. [brian]

GOLDEN DELICIOUS *Old School* (Cavity Search) – "White Knuckle Breakdown" Banjos! Fiddles! Instrumental! (Though if it's a factor for anyone else, I did a quick track flip-through, and was apparently just lucky for them to pick the one without vocals.)]] Yee Haw! [Lo]

HECATE ENTHRONED *Dark Requiems and Unsilent Massacre* (Death Records) – "Mommy, why does all the black metal sound the same?" "Darling, of course it doesn't." Like many of its brethren bands in the genre of evil, Hecate Enthroned continues to put out CDs in the fast-and-frantic meets spooky-and-classical mode. Put on the corpse paint, turn up the volume in the Volkswagen, and crash into the front of a church. Be sure to knock the cross over. [lisa aa]

HIGHWAY 13 *Been Up Devil's Business* (Get Hip) – "B-Movie Queen" So I'm a sucker for the rockabilly three-piece cliché. What's not to like about fast cars, fast chicks, stand-up bass, and indigo 517s with big cuffs? [Lo]

HUMPERS *Euphoria, Confusion, Anger and Remorse* (Epitaph) – "Peggy Sue got Buried" (a tune named after the movie, which has some celebrities in it, I suppose) is a typical song by the Humpers, who play fast honky-tonk punk rock that I can't get into. I heard they got beat up at Fern's and later on, when the guys who did it found out they were in an Epitaph band, they apologized. I guess being famous will at least get you some "I'm sorrys" after a good beating. [jack]

IDA SESSIONS *Give Us the Crystals* (Red Alert Works) – The Sleestacks slither through the dark chambers gathering luminescent crystals for their leader. His name is Christopher Walken. They break into a hissing chant "Give us the crystals, give us the crystals!" to any lost traveler. This music plays throughout the corridors as Chaka sways to the beat. [epcott]

JON COUGAR CONCENTRATION CAMP *'Til Niagra Falls* (BYO) – "I Wanna See Your Tattoo" I actually cheated and listened to more than one song, so I guess that says something.... Though I have no idea where these boys hail from, this strikes me as New York music. Some people will never get tired of Stiv Bators. [Lo]

KITTY CRAFT *Beats and Breaks From The Flower Patch* (Kindercore) – If you're a fan of the Kostars (musically), "Beats and Breaks..." will groove ya. Vocals do sound a bit on the nasal tip. Hmmm...rhinoplasty: the price one pays to bathe in the limelight! [m&g]

KOO-KOO BOY *Welcome to Monster Island* (no label info, except a Web site: http://www.panix.com/~troll) – This Koo-Koo Boy is bound to be a celebrity, striking a pose in nothing but boots, skivvies, and a referee's uniform on this, the funniest album cover I've seen in years. His music is reminiscent of the B-52s (he's more flamboyant than Fred Schneider), with some goth and Smiths-type stuff thrown in. His ode to Stretch Armstrong is surefire. I can't really say I liked it, but that cover is worth it. [jack]

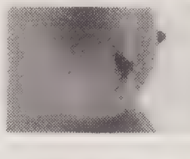
LA PESTE *[self-titled]* (Matador) – Fame eluded this fucking excellent Boston punk band in their initial late-'70s lifespan, and even this Matador reissue has failed to bring them the glory they deserve. "Better off Dead" is one of the best punk songs ever, and the other 20 live and studio tracks are all at least very very good. Their singer/guitarist/lyricist's name deserves to be in print more often. Here's a beginning: Peter Dayton. [brian]

BEN LEE *Breathing Tornados* (Grand Royal) – They must have bought the rights to Ben Lee for mega bucks, banking on some huge and long-lasting folk/pop career. It's obvious Ben's creative and sweet and has a well-working voice that would make all that happen. He's good. (Good = fits into the world as is without hurting and more likely pleasing people who'd prefer things not to change too much [he's no Beck]). Anyway, what I was getting at was, did this get any radio play? Did it sell? Did the bidding war pay off? Well, Ben Lee is GOOD. And as long as he can mature without changing he'll have that fruitful future every young artisan hopes for. Did that sound harsh? If I was his mother I'd be proud. [darby]

LILLINGTIONS *Death By Television* (Panic Button) – "I Need Some Brain Damage" I used to really love indie power-pop, until the whole scene went the way of slowed-down experimental noise-prog crap. So you can imagine how infrequently I now encounter such a band that doesn't bore me to tears, and what a happy surprise energy pop indeed is! Their whole sci-fi noir shtick is an added bonus. [Lo]

LONG FIN KILLIE *Amelia* (Too Pure) – A fascinatingly lean and shimmeringly brilliant British band that has been and will unfortunately probably continue to be ignored. The rare record where both the vocals and percussion function as equal objects of contemplation and pleasure. Trance-inducing in a complex and chewy way. Will most likely never be famous. [brian]

MACHA *[self-titled]* (Jet Set) – How pleasant. Something new, tribal Buddhist that unfortunately gets art rock. This would be better if they pretended a little harder that they weren't American. Maybe cut out that singing. First song is super as are lots of little things in between. [darby]



THE MASQUERS CLUB SALUTES MAE WEST *Mae Day: Featuring Mae West and a Host of Celebrities* (Dionysus) So it's lotsa old-school celebrities (e.g. Jim Bachus and Jack La Rue) hailing the praises of Ms. West from a banquet held in her honor in 1973. The best parts were the few tracks where she actually sings. [Lo]

MERCEDES *Rear End* (No Limit) – Master P is so tacky! I stopped listening to him after those first few awesome albums 'cause he just keeps repeating himself. And then his artists all sound the same because they each play on each other's albums. And they sing the same words. And it's like a No Limit rap machine – it's running full power, churning this crap out. The booklet with this CD is flush with ads for all the upcoming albums (including the other car girl acts – Porsha, A-Lexxus...). No Limit Sports gear – in stores now! No Limit Soldier Converse shoes available at Foot Locker. "Hit 'Em" has a few neat-o sounds. I like the play on "Nasty Girls" called "Do You Wanna Ride" which is a lil' more hardcore. I couldn't get past there, though. [darby]

MEAT JOY *[self-titled]* (Death Rebel) – "I am so Pretty" I never would've thought a girl singer could sound so much like John Lydon. [Lo]

MISS MURGATROID AND PETRA HADEN *Bella Neurox* (Win) – I think I'd buy everything Petra did. What a superstar. And here coupled with Miss M. some magic happens. Violin and accordion (plus occasional mandolin, feedback and vocals), it's just very delightful. Atmospheric and sweet (didn't much like the fancy "Vox" duet, maybe because it reminded me of Petra's song on the Poop Alley comp a few years back which is simpler but better). Cover art by Christina Shields can't be beat. Really, I do sell everything back, but I'm keeping this. [darby]

MYSTIKAL *Ghetto Fabulous* (No Limit) – Nowhere near as lame as almost every other No Limit release, I actually allowed this to play all the way through. Mystikal has his shit together, though the production could be better. (It could also be way, way worse – though the artwork couldn't be). [evan]

NELS CLINE/DEVIN SARNO *Edible Flowers* (WIN) – Unpretentious, atmospheric, improvisational soundscapes mostly recorded live by this bass and guitar duo. Keep 'em comin', boys. [evan]

NOBODYS *Greatasstits* (Hopeless) – 52 turbo-charged porn punk songs that will leave you wanting more – of some other band. These guys are from Colorado Springs, and the last time I was there I saw a pregnant girl smoking cigs and dope and drinking beer – was she ever punk. I also gave a cigarette to a ten-year-old with a mohawk – punk rock points galore! Anyway, the only selling point for this is the big set of jugs on the cover, which I'm sure will work for some sex-starved teen. [jack]

OMINOUS SEAFOODS *Matinee Idols* (Hydrophonics) – "Anything is Possible" Too bad I wasn't judging only on cover art, because there's a very nice leopard-bikini–clad starlet with the head of a space alien (not unlike most Victoria's Secret models...). Unfortunately, I had to push play... [Lo]

OTHERS 7" *Can't Help But Cry* (360 Twist!) – I think this record really was recorded in 1966. There's something about a good ol' garage band with Spanish accents singing away about absolutely nothing. Love songs, silly songs, whatever. Man, they really had it good back then. There's nothing raunchy, tough, or fake about it; just a bunch of nice, semi-orchestrated, slightly psychedelic pop songs. Damn. Looks like they all wear great clothes, too. Whatever happened to style? Hmm? Definitely a good record if you appreciate the simpler end of the '60s purist spectrum. If not, stick to your "tough guy" records and you'll be fine. [Marydeath]

OTHERSTARPEOPLE *Diamond in the Belly of the Dog* (A&M) – Nice title, huh? Ur. This is fuggin' powerhouse shit. I only reviewed it because I noticed a blonde Jennifer Finch on the cover. What's up, girlfriend! Other members are from Chalk Circle and Bullet Lavolta and one from...Japan (I believe that's the country, yes). This is all about the single hit which is pretty awesome...for a KROQ driving-fast-in-LA jag. Anthemic high-school rock. The kids will suck this yahoo up. [darby]

[h]

PANTERA *101 proof live* – A lot of people have a problem with Pantera. I guess it's their politics that are in question, but if you're looking for political music, I don't think Pantera is your best choice anyway. What these guys do best is rock, in the dirtiest and smelliest, sweatiest, meat-and-potatoes way. Leave politics for crooning losers with bongos that like to go off about the state of the world. This album was recorded live and there are cheering fans at every moment. I've never been to a show this enthusiastic, and I suspect a little retrofitting here. Philip Anselmo sounds like someone I wouldn't ever want to meet, but far away, in stereo, the man is a god. Get wasted and raucous and crank it, all right? Now shut up about that racist homophobe bullshit, and go out and get in a fight. Hear me now. Yeah, and the album cover looks like a bottle of bourbon. Swig it and weep. [lisa aa]

PAUL SCHÜTZE *Green Evil* (Tone Casualties) – "Dead Hearts" We

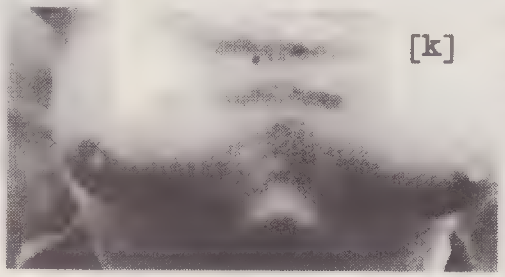
I'm still a little disconcerted when I'm asked to sign a lady's boson...It's a challenge to write one's name on a quivering breast without using the other hand to steady it. –Adam West fade into the apocalyptic vision of William Shatner. With every shot we see cheezoid post-neo-clichéd-isms, rehashed pretentious had-to-have-it-his-way costumes, props, and sounds. [epcott]

PINWHEEL *Chemical Jar* (Blow Up) – Their song "Flying Monkeys", a Wizard of Oz homage, sounds like the Smithereens (if they were eunuchs) and Blue Oyster Cult (having a sword-fight in Paul Westerberg's mouth). Worst of all, they thank Steve Zepeda, a balding, cut-throat Long Beach promoter best known for booking middle-of-the-road rockasilly and power-pop crap bands (and giving them the old reach-around to boot). Oh yeah, all of the above were compliments. [jack]

PLASTILINA MOSH *Aquamosh* (there's like five labels listed here, fuck 'em) – I've had this puppy in my 10-disc CD changer in my car for months. I hate those things. I never know which band it is and always forget to check once I'm out of the car. This sounds like something Grand Royal would get their hands on. Dance-y freaky Mexicano. But hip, not Latin wave. Like you might catch them playing with Cibo Matto. I don't know what I'm talking about anymore. You know what I'm really thinking? That these are the last record reviews I will ever have to do, that's why I'm wasting this limited space on a band on a major (I think)… Well, it's 'cause I've been rockin' the highways to this and now today I finally know who this band is and got excited. Not a lot excited, just decently. [darby]

PLASTISCENE *Seeing Stars* (Mojo) – It sounds like something you've heard before. Not unpleasant, kinda pop appealing. Very radio-friendly. Haven't I heard this before? The singer says "'90s psychedelia," and I'm not here to disagree. Actually, what am I here for? For fans who like the pop of Suede. (I like the pop of Suede.) This is just more American. [darby]

POLARBEAR *Why Something Instead of Nothing?* (PBR) – I was going to say this isn't my cup of tea, but then it started to …bear on me. Neat in a plodding, creatively layered, funky/trippy/arty rockin' way. It's kinda restrained, especially the vocals, but maybe that's what I like about it the best. Stars our cover artist Dani Tull, Eric Troy, ex–Ethyl Meatplow's Harold Sanders, and Jane's Addiction's Eric Avery. [darby]



PUSSYCATS PLAYIN' DIRTY *Hell 48* – "No TV/Knock Out" Really fast girl-punk. From their music, I get the feeling that if I said anything bad about their record, they'd somehow hunt me down and kick my ass, so it's a good thing I don't have anything bad to say. [Lo]

MARKY RAMONE AND THE INTRUDERS *The Answer to Your Problems?* (Zoe/Rounder) – The answer to our problems? Isn't that what every man is? (cough cough) This is punk rock late-'70s style. Strange when the star-drawing name plays drums and doesn't sing. Produced by Lars. I like Rancid. Anyway, this is all good for what it's worth but it makes me think of the *Outsiders* when the second vocalist chimes in 'cause he sounds like a little boy. [darby]

RANDOM *Too Stoned to Sneeze* (Evil Teen) – Must all drum and bass sound alike? Yes. I do like this line on their CD tray: plan > > eat right > > exercise regularly > > die anyway.

JIM ROME *Welcome to the Jungle* (Outpost Recordings) – Whoever knew that an all-talk sports radio show could be so damn compelling? When I first moved to the Southland, some sports fan turned me on to XTRA Sports 690, a talk show featuring the rantings of The Man, Jim Rome, aka "Romey." Romey had code names for everything and everybody; he'd developed a secret language, and listeners would call and chime in, push the linguist to delve further. Interspersing commentary and "smack" about the world of athleticism, Romey would play his theme songs "Welcome to the Jungle" and "Lust for Life". The CD version of the radio show is a collection of "bits," callers, rants, arguments, and, of course, a few musical numbers thrown in. Romey's fans won't want to live without it, but the uninitiated will just scratch their heads. Now that Romey's show is nationally syndicated, check him out on the AM dial. [lisa aa]

RED ELVISES *I Wanna See You Bellydance* "Rocketman" (Shooba Dooba) – I admit it, I laughed. Maybe it's the Russian accents, or maybe it was the very applicable-to-this-issue "voices of stars turning me on" lyric. Also applicable is their bio's long list of TV credits like *Melrose Place.* Though when I listened to more songs, the funny started to wear off. [Lo]

REO SPEEDEALER (Royalty) – Lost in Kansas City, finding REO listed in the weekly, alone I walked, hitched, and eventually found the place. Without much cash I asked the owner to get the band and this big ol' guy comes out friendly as fuck and puts me on their list and I'm without needed earplugs, aurally body slammed up front in a crowd of few for their three-song jackknife set. They remind me of the older guys we'd get stoned with when playing hooky at boarding school, who'd roll monster joints and wouldn't rape us but instead were just real nice and cordial hicks. Anyway, I pulled together all my pennies and bought myself a t-shirt. [darby]

ROSE MELBERG *Portola* (Double Agent) – Acoustic campfire songs that surely will bring all the cows home while scaring all the Indians away…may even put Willie Nelson on the road again. [m&g]

SADISTIC INTENT *Resurrection* (Gothic) – Local death-metal band from the hometown of the Carpenters plays your basic. Nothing too innovative here, but the quality is high. Devil on the cover. [lisa aa]

SEAN LENNON *Into the Sun* (Grand Royal) – "Sean's Theme" So in addition to all his "music" being hellishly slow (maybe I wasn't the best reviewer for the job, but them's the breaks, kid), his liner notes on the back jacket were ridiculously pretentious. OK, so he's happy to be going out with the girl from Cibo Matto. Who wouldn't be? If my Daddy was as famous as his, I could have my pick of girlfriends, and I guess record companies would let me issue my boring CDs too, because let's face it, if he wasn't the evil spawn of John and Yoko, no one (with taste anyway) would've let him. [Lo]

SHARON AMERICA *Free2BU* "Paradise Pond" (Laundry Room) – Almost boring enough to be an FM radio not-quite-smash-one-hit-wonder. God Bless America. [Lo]

PHIL SHOENFELT & SOUTHERN CROSS *Blue Highway* (Idiot Savant) – **Nightmare #1:** Your fourteen-year-old Marilyn Mansonite-recently-turned-goth cousin somehow succeeds in dragging you to see this band called Phil Shoenfelt & Southern Cross. "Who the fuck are they?" you ask. She answers, "Well, I just read about them in *Melody Maker*, who described them as 'moody as fuck and gothic in the proper sense of the word.'" Before you know it, the band's performing "Back in the Underworld". You then look to the left and standing there is Tori Spelling. "Wow, what's she doing here?" you wonder. Then you turn to your right and standing there is a strung-out Brian Austin Green. "Wow, that's weird," you think to yourself... Then Tiffani Amber Pumpkinhead Thiessen walks up to him and you come crashing to the realization that you're an extra in the upcoming *Beverly Hills 90210* episode where it's Goth Nite at the After Dark, and David's trying to kick one of his drug habits again. (You pick: cocaine, speed, crack, heroin, glue... don't worry, he'll be over it in two episodes.) This being a bad dream and all, you realize the place has gone Carrie (Sissy Spacek–style) and there's no possible escape. At this point, you frantically look around for Brandon to give you some of that Euphoria (or at least some guy with a 4 emblazoned on his shirt), but then you sadly discover he's left the show and you're stuck in what the *New Musical Express* describes this band as: a sticky black nightmare. [shirley]

SLOAN *Navy Blues* (Universal) – "Money City Maniacs" I'm leaning toward possibly liking this one, like maybe listening to a few more tracks would decide me. But I'm going to be good and resist the urge for now, and just stick with the hand-clapping coke-fizz soda-pop stylings of the one song. [Lo]

SNAP-HER *Queen Bitch of Rock & Roll* (New Red Archives) – This Snap-Her chick really likes her cunt. So much so that she put a picture of it in the CD tray. With her '77 approach and her Mentors-styled lyrics, she tackles the important issue of Beavis-ing somebody in "I Wanna Beavis You", a cut (no pun intended) that reminded me of the World's Longest Piece of Stool Museum that I visited with the Clash back in the ol' punk days, but without the Clash. [jack]

SPAIN *She Haunts My Dreams* (Restless) – Another Haden! Unlike the girls (sisters Petra, Rachel, & Tanya), this does nothing for me but I must not have minded it at least when watching the great movie *I'm Losing You* 'cause I actually sat through the credits and noticed Spain listed. Well, the band had that "buzz" and writer/director Bruce Wagner's quite hip to the shit. Still, I don't get it. Wallow wallow wallow. Maybe it's good *because* it's oblique. Maybe it's better for soundtracks. [darby]

THEE SPIVIES *Ready Or Not Here We Come* "Holly" (Jackson/Rubio) – So I have it on good authority that this song is about *Breakfast at Tiffany's* Holly Golightly. I went to go see a buncha Long Beach bands one night, and Thee Spivies were last on the bill. Now, I'd only lived in Long Beach for six years, but some of the other (admittedly small group, but all hailing from LB) audience members have been stuck there for decades, and no one had ever heard of them even though they've apparently been around for years, so we all stayed to watch because they were dressed identically, kinda like a band that would play a 1960s high-school dance. So they were amazing! Power pop with a bit of a '60s feel, but the greatest thing was that they transcended Geek Rock! Now I'm not talkin' hip-geek like Weezer, or super-silly but nonetheless hip-geek-rock like The Moseleys (another one of my new favorite bands), but these boys were REAL GEEKS! The kind that not only you didn't talk to in high school, but you didn't talk to in college either, even if they were in the art department where the biggest high-school outcasts can become indie-rock phenomena. Any day now, Paul Westerburg will have to roll over as Thee Spivies take center stage. [Lo]

SPORTSGUITAR *Happy Already* (Matador) – This CD is a little too corny, but it's all we got from Matador, and I wanted to try it out. Matador doesn't send us music because they say we don't review their stuff, but we don't review their stuff because for the last three years they haven't sent us anything. I cannot complain because their ads have kept us in business. But I know they put out music I might like, music I might buy, or recommend…this wouldn't be included in that list. [darby]

STAR GHOST DOG *Happy Love* (Catapult) – "To Do" Safe sonic college radio POP with lyrical references to vodka, cocaine, quaaludes, heroin, hot tubs and fondue! A regular celebrity "To Do" list. [m&g]

STARLITE DESPERATION *Show You What a Baby Won't* (Gold Standard Laboratories) – "New Year's Bathroom Magic" And they say listening to too much Jon Spencer isn't hazardous to your health – I suppose the consequences *are* less dire than if you listen to too much Ozzy backwards. [Lo]

STRIFE *In this Defiance* (Victory) – This band rules. Straight-edge guys knock my socks off. Ignore the stupid artsy cover art, because it's not all dark and gloomy as the lame photos of guns and miserableness suggest. Strife has some long instrumentals, but they are best when strictly hardcore, shouting proudly, loudly. [lisa aa]

SUPERMODEL GT *Popocalypse Now!* – "David Rockstar" (God Bless) So I know the whole point of having One Song Album Reviews (in addition to being gimmick-appropriate to this issue) was so I wouldn't have to sit through the entire thing – and therefore could get to the CD trade counter faster, but when the most celebrity-friendly title track is slow (which I hope we've all learned by now means BORING, so speed it up if you want to make it in this town), I skip around a bit to make sure I don't pass on the Next Big Thing judging by the one token sleeper on an otherwise rockin' release. So, while the other less fame-inspired songs are not as attention-deficit inducing as the original choice, this CD is still headed for the sell stack. [Lo]

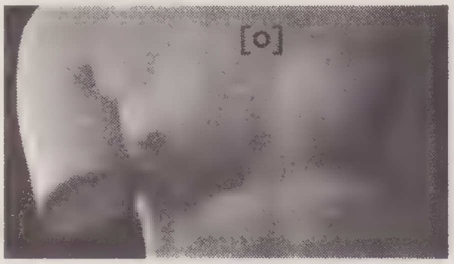
SUPERFIENDS *Hi-Fi Sci-Fi* – Here I've been spending all these years passing myself off as a dark and death-oriented person, waxing poetic

In July 1998, Tricky, upset with a profile in British magazine the *Face*, attacked its author at England's Glastonbury Festival.

about my love for hearses and all things doomed, and now I'm forced to admit with the arrival of this CD that I really don't know what the fuck I'm talking about. Great, now everyone is gonna know that I'm a closet Aztec Camera freak, for chrissakes. To get myself in the Superfiends state of mind, I generously apply two coats of liquid eyeliner, peel down to my skivvies, and climb on into the Buick. This procedure works in case of dire emergency and is commonly referred to as "The Test Drive." This particular run required that I wear nothing but eyeliner and that a thin layer of sweat be the only thing between my fat ass and the faux leather of the Buick's interior. I took to the road in search of victims. A veritable feast of flesh that was much enhanced by the winning combination of barren freeway tempered by a touch of death and a dash of speed. Subtle harmonies poke through the surface and emphasize a great interplay between instrumentation and sampling. A very sultry, dark, sexual feel that is perhaps a combination of the deranged "fuck me" guitar jabs, or maybe it's the simmering rasp of the lyrics. Somewhat Manson-esque in its sense of urgency, Superfiends refrains from dabbling in the "weird for weirdness' sake" shtick; and they point the lyrical finger at themselves from time to time, which is a good thing as it helps to have a sense of humor about things when you're naked. [Marydeath]

SYMPOSIUM *On the Outside* (Red Ant) – "Bury You" **NIGHTMARE #2:** You're walking on campus and everything seems like a bad MTV video. Some stupid song by Symposium is playing and you're singing along to the lyrics. "Why don't you love me?" you sing out loud to some guy ahead of you that you're stalking and that you've been stalking ever since you were a freshman in high school. Why did that girl (who bears a remarkable similarity to the original Pink Power Ranger) who just walked by wave to you and say, "Hi, Felicity"? All you know is that you passed up going to some Ivy League college so that you could stalk some loser boy because you're a complete idiot with bad hair, and you wish this song would just end. [Shirley]

TAROT BOLERO *Vaudeville Rising* (Ace Fu) – "Spells, Charms, Incantations" They're going for that whole creepy-crawly spooky calliope carnival gospel haunted house of mirrors thing, and that's definitely the way to go. Most applicable quote: "In my life I wanted to be a star, I want to win the world and all its pretty girls." [Lo]



TERABITHIA *Yes, I'm Talking to You* (76 2%) – "Wonka" In second grade, that book, *Bridge to Terabithia*, really depressed me when his best friend dies at the end. This song put me in similarly foul spirits. [Lo]

THOR *Ride of the Chariots* (Star USA) – Thor is this dude who looks and acts like a comic book character and sings really lame anthemy songs along with his sidekick, Cherry Bomb, whose boobs are about to fall out of her tight, '80s-style vixen dress. Thor goes topless (just leather straps) and his pecs are impressive, but his singing sort of sucks. His songs are about gladiators and Valhalla. [lisa aa]

THRIFT STORE HALO *World Gone Mad* (Hi-Beam) – "Can't Understand" Maybe they should spend a little more time pawing through thrift-store record bins instead of wasting money making their own. [Lo]

TODAY IS THE DAY *Temple of the Morning Star* (Relapse) – Jokey metal band has pentagrams and sperm together on the cover. The sperm seem to be swimming towards the pentagram; does this mean that Woman equals Satan? These guys have a sense of humor, and their music encompasses various styles, including a lot of plucky guitar and some metallish screaming. I swear Track 4 samples Dr. Susan Block talking about ass-licking, but I asked my friend who is a pornographer, and he wasn't sure it was her. Some of the tracks are a bit plodding. [lisa aa]

TRUCKSTOP *Truck Tractor Rear View* (Black Hoodz) – "Coast to Coast" features a distorted 18-wheeler of a vocal, rapping about a convoy over a Sabbath riff. Sounds like Kris Kristofferson on "meth" after a Slayer gig. [m&g]

TURA SATANA *Relief Through Release* (F.A.D.) "Unclean" – Maybe White Zombie, Monster Magnet, or other such gloomster-metal fans could dig this, but who's to say what those freaks would like? [Lo]

TUSCADERO *My Way or the Highway* (Elektra) – "Queen for a Day" The Runaways dipped in caramel coating and rolled around in rainbow sprinkles. (How many people are salivating at that prospect?) They can even be Queen for a whole week. [Lo]

TORIE TYSON *You're Gonna Get it in the End* (Primenet) – "Fox on the Run" It's practically impossible to cover this song badly because it's so great to start with…practically. On a more famous note, Ms. Tyson is pictured on the back next to her very own star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. [Lo]

UNWOUND *Challenge for a Civilized Society* (KillRockStars) – Some bands just have the luck of being loved. They're indie rock, with some crafty maneuvering. They're indie stars. I'm listening to them for the first time, a little too late for it to make the same impression as they have on my peers. The bass player is putting out Chokebore…and for that alone I love them. [darby] p.s. Oh, how'd this get in the pile? This thing is well over old. Oops.

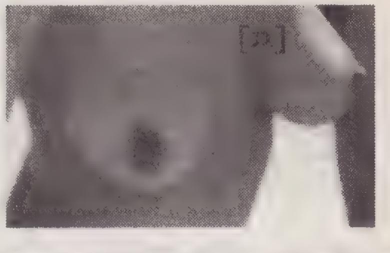
JUNIOR VASQUEZ *Vol 2*, double CD (Pagoda Entertainment) – For chronic clubbies and lovers of power-pumping techno, this set is a must-have addition to any good collection. **CD A** consists of a dark set of sonic hypnotrancedance peppered with abundant sound-bites speaking inane pronouncements, such as "Magic orgasm" and "We are the dreamers," or uttering commands like "Annihilate" (translates to "Dance! Dance! Dance!") to their zombie troops. **CD B** has a lighter feel to it. It talks more about sex than power and killing but still maintains the groovy beat. Both discs are equally enjoyable at full scream – when bouncing all night, pounding your knees into useless hunks of bone and flesh at some Westside Manhattan club, pounding your girlfriend's crotch into the same – or playing quietly as background naptime music. The entrancing effect of the beat acts interchangeably (depending on the atmosphere) as a better speed than crank and glass, or as a stronger sleeping aid than Rohipnol. Both CDs have more than enough beat and ample rezzos to satisfy the most finicky of techno-junkies. Because of its hypnotic effect, however, this CD is not recommended driving fare. [Eby]

V/A *Beer Frame Presents Object Lessons Songs About Products* – Unlike last year's stupendous "Product Music" comp CD, these aren't songs commissioned and presented by corporations themselves, but rather indie-rock middleweights writing songs of their own volition about products (with nudges from CD sponsor Paul Lukas of the wonderful product review zine *Beer Frame*), and the results are often powerful and poignant. As you would toward the products themselves, you can both admire the sheer craftsmanship and feel strangely compelled toward a deeply personal emotional reaction. The winning tune is Mountain Goats' "Golden Boy", with the gripping lyrical lesson: "There are no pan-Asian supermarkets down in hell/So you can't buy Golden Boy Peanuts/You must give to the March of Dimes/You must be on guard against wickedness at all times/You will find that your efforts have brought you great joy/When your spirit is munching on that Golden Boy." [brian]

V/A *Sac Pop Compilation* (Poprockit) – This radio-friendly collection of Sacramento-ians is fun and sugary, at times a little heavy-handed – with sweetener that is... but if you wheeze along with Weezer and do not mind a bit of Elvis's impersonators, King Costello that is, this is purrrfect for your kitty's christening. Meow! Meow! [m&g]

V/A *Porn To Rock* (Callner Music Inc.) – Just because you're a fuck powerhouse doesn't mean you should be a rock star, too. It just doesn't work that way. Yes, rock stars are, by their very nature, sexy, but the converse isn't true. Porn stars don't necessarily rock. Sure, they've got the patina of sexuality down, but, undeniably, that's not all it takes to make good music. Porn to Rock, a CD featuring tracks from a variety of porn professionals, will appeal only to those obsessed by the perceived glamour of the adult business. Frankly, the music sucks. And, if you want to be a stickler about it, the porn stars represented aren't really all that hot either, with the exception of Midori, who sings a danceable ditty, and Chloe, who cries "Fuck me harder" throughout a techno piece. Longtime porno fans will be thrilled to learn that Ginger Lynn's successfully crossed over into mainstream acting, though her foray into music is pretty weak. However, since Porn to Rock was released, Ginger's been spied on set, back in the jizz biz. Johnny Toxic, he of the bad taste and the big, usually soft, cock, does an absolutely insipid tune called "Happy" with his aptly named band Johnny Toxic. Vinnie Spit – whose claim to porn fame seems to be that he's married to a dominatrix and appears in fetish vids – sings a stupid song about liking ass. Bad words abound, which gets a big "Who cares?" in my book. Ultimately, the "musicians" featured on this CD are not making the transition from porn to rock very gracefully, but, as is evident by the standards of the XXX business, quality isn't everything, and porno fans will love this, even though it's horrendous. [Lisa AA]

V/A *Music from the Drew Carey Show* (Rhino) – So trés celebrity to have not only movie soundtracks, but TV-show soundtracks. This is actually pretty rockin', not like that crap they advertise after each episode of *90210* and *Charmed*. Though I'm sure I don't know how much Drew Carey actually had to do with picking out the soundtrack to his career, he's pretty cute in those birth-control glasses. [Lo]



V/A *Songs for the Jet Set* (Jetset) – **NIGHTMARE #3:** You find yourself on an airplane and everything is very Sanrio and adorable. You realize that you're that Milky candy girl and all is cute and sweet, just like yourself. The stewardess, clad in classic Courreges, offers you mimosas and Shirley Temples. She also hands you a Hello Kitty headset. You put it on. It's the *Songs for the Jetset* compilation. The music is made especially for you. There's even a band named after you. One of the songs is called "Surround yourself with Milky", and the space-poppiness of it all envelops you like dancing marshmallows, and you fall into a blissful sleep. Everything seems too nice, and you don't ever want to wake up...but life is cruel and you're jarred awake by some terrible pseudo-goth music, and you realize you've been dreaming and that you've woken up into NIGHTMARE #1. (See Phil Shoenfelt and Southern Cross review) [Shirley]

V/A *This is the A.L.F.* (Mortarhate Records) – Banding together to protect kittens and laboratory mice – this is what punk rock is all about, right? Informative booklet contains gruesome photos of science experiments, angry diatribes against animal abuse, and the lyrics to Conflict's songs, like "Meat is Still Murder" and "Slaughter of Innocence". Political action contact information in the back of the booklet leaves out the U.S. completely, so maybe no one's taking advantage of kitty-cats over here. The CD includes vegetarian ballads by the great Icons of Filth as well as by Existence, Dirt, Subhumans, Liberty, and plenty of others. Buy it because you believe in the Animal Liberation Front, keep it for the tunes, but don't blame us when Uncle John's experimental transplant fails because someone let all the lab rats free. [lisa aa]

VENDETTAS *Can't Stop 7"* (360 Twist!) – Uh, yes please. Big, loose, dirty, bluesy filth smattered with twangy raunch. A female lead who invokes images of a tarted-up 12-year-old being forced to stay after school and write "I will not show my pussy in class" on the blackboard 100 times. That is, of course, assuming that her teacher was a woman. [Marydeath]

VOO DOO GLOW SKULLS *The Band Geek Mafia* (Epitaph) – No celebrities here…oh, wait, they sound like Oingo Boingo did in 1985, and Danny Elfman is a celebrity into Scientology, so I guess I can review it. Voo Doo's latest disc is pure, unadulterated skrap (ska + crap) replete with junior-high yearbook lyrics, ham-and-egger horn riffs, and little tiny guitars. They need ten people in a band to launch this crap rocket? [jack]

W.A.C.O. *Wig Rodeo* (True Classic/Transparency) – It's kinda weird getting a CD and your pict is front and center on the cover. This is music from Marcel's *Wig Rodeo* – a long-in-the-making short which actually came out intriguing; love the backwards-shot effect, time-consuming but worth the effort (I still have wire-hanger flashbacks). The diverse, eclectic music all supplied by W.A.C.O., composed by genius Steve Gregoropoulus who'll be famous some day yet (especially if his friends keep writing about him in the local papers). But he deserves it. W.A.C.O. (Wild Acoustic Chamber Orchestra) has turned into a real neat thing – and the vocals are growing on me. [darby] p.s. Also check out W.A.C.O.'s latest "Sylvania" as well as other music Steve is putting out on his *A True Classic* CD through the new Transparency label.

THE YOUNG HASSELHOFFS *Win a Date With* (Melted) – "Not Ugly Enough to be a Ramone" Funny comic on the inside jacket, funny titles, funny speed-pop tunes – though it won't be so funny when they turn 35, but they still have about a decade and a half to worry about burnout. [Lo]

My father said, "Hey, Drew, you want to give me an autograph too? How about putting it on a check?" –Drew Barrymore

WALTER WINCHELL

Typically of course we wouldn't need to do this, writing geniuses that we are, the extra time on our hands, knowledge at our fingertips.... But the introduction for this book brought up a number of well-worded pieces of information concerning celebrity and American culture, and of course the man who almost single-handedly defined what it would mean—at least journalistically—for years to come. Sometimes it's someone else who has worded it best. So it appears only slightly abridged and without permision (but we recommend you check out the book)...

Winchell: Gossip, Power & the Culture of Celebrity

by Neal Gabler
Vintage Books, New York

In the end, few really remembered, fewer cared. His daughter Walda was the only mourner at his funeral, and a memorial service held six weeks later on what would have been his seventy-fifth birthday attracted only 150 guests, many of whom drifted out before the eulogies ended. There were front-page obituaries, but they portrayed him as a relic long past his prime. An attempt by friends to rename the traffic island in New York's Times Square after him and erect a monument there met with bureaucratic indifference. Nothing he left behind seemed to endure. His name faded – the name he had worked so hard to burn into the public consciousness.

By the time of Walter Winchell's death a friend admitted that trying to explain him to a generation unfamiliar with him "would be like trying to explain Napoleon to the second French generation after the Napoleonic wars." But for more than four decades Walter Winchell had been an American institution, and arguably one of the principal architects of the culture. By one estimate, fifty million Americans – out of an adult population of roughly seventy-five million – either listened to his weekly radio broadcast or read his daily column, which, at its height in the late thirties and forties, was syndicated in more than two thousand newspapers; it was, according to one observer, the "largest continuous audience ever possessed by a man who was neither politician nor divine." It was said that when he switched papers in New York, two hundred thousand readers followed him, and one report attributed nearly half the readership of the Hearst newspaper chain to Winchell's column. Presidents courted him, and government officials of America's foreign enemies castigated him by name. Hit songs were written about him, and Hollywood coaxed him to star in two movies, both of which were box-office successes. For a time you could walk down any street on a warm Sunday night at nine o'clock, when his broadcast aired, and hear his disembodied voice wafting from open windows, giving ghostly validation to his own slogan: "Winchell...HE SEES ALL...HE KNOWS ALL."

He had first come to public attention in the twenties as the Bard of Broadway, a glib, wisecracking young columnist on the New York *Graphic* whose life and writing seemed perfectly synchronized to the rhythms of the Jazz age. "It was his contribution," drama critic and raconteur Alexander Woollcott wrote approvingly of Winchell's early effect on American journalism, "to go on strike against the vast impersonality which, at the time of his advent, was deadening the American newspaper into a kind of daily Congressional Record." He wrote in a smart, slangy prose that no less an expert than H.L. Mencken credited with having enlarged the American vernacular. Couples didn't get married in Winchell's column; they were "welded," "lohengrinned," "Adam-and-Eveing it." They didn't have fun; they "made whoopee!" They didn't have babies; they had "blessed events." And when they got divorced, they were "Reno-vated" or "phffft!" Movies were "moom pitchers" and movie lovers were "cinemaddicts." Legs were "shafts." Passion was "pash." Debutants were "debutramps." Jews were "Joosh." It was a vigorous style, personal and pungent, and as early as 1929, *Vanity Fair* was reporting that Winchell had "inspired more burlesques of himself than any other writer since Hemingway."

But if his vivid prose helped transform the style of journalism and made him a popular curiosity, what made him a national phenomenon was gossip. In 1925, at a time when the editors of most newspapers were reluctant to publish even something as inoffensive as the notice of an impending birth for fear of crossing the boundaries of good taste, Winchell introduced a revolutionary column that reported who was romancing whom, who was cavorting with gangsters, who was ill or dying, who was suffering financial difficulties, which spouses were having affairs, which couples were about to divorce, and dozens of other secrets, peccadilloes and imbroglios that had previously been concealed from public view. In doing so, he not only broke a long-standing taboo; he suddenly and single-handedly expanded the purview of American journalism forever.

But he did not just invent the modern gossip column. He became an opinion-maker largely because he understood, as no one else then seemed to, the bitter subtext of the gossip he purveyed. Having grown up in poverty himself, attention-starved, and nursing deep resentments against his social betters, he understood that gossip, far beyond its basic attraction as journalistic voyeurism, was a weapon of empowerment for the reader and listener. Invading the lives of the famous and revealing their secrets brought them to heel. It humanized them, and in humanizing them demonstrated that they were no better than we and in many cases worse. Or as Winchell once put it to an associate, "Democracy is where everybody can kick everybody else's ass," adding, "but you can't kick Winchell's."

Writing in 1933 with an appreciation for Winchell's impact on society, Woollcott predicted that historians would some day label the era "the Age of the two Walters, Lippmann and Winchell." In making this declaration, Woollcott recognized that Lippmann, the sage political columnist, and Winchell constituted not only the extremes of American journalism but, far more important, represented the combatants in a war for America itself in a period of dynamic social change, a war over who would finally set the nation's cultural agenda. On one side was Lippmann, the patrician, reasoned and moderate, the urban elitist, the counselor to the mighty and skeptic of the rationality of the popular will, the embodiment, by temperament if not birth, of the embattled American aristocracy. On the other side was Winchell, the plebian, flip and intemperate, the urban scamp, the voice of the disenchanted and disenfranchised and the champion of democracy, the embodiment of the ascendant American masses.

To challenge the mature, elitist, bookish culture of Lippmann, which had dominated American life for more than a century, Winchell had helped inaugurate a new mass culture of celebrity—centered in New York and Hollywood and Washington, fixated on personalities, promulgated by the media, predicated on publicity, dedicated to the ephemeral and grounded on the principle that notoriety confers power. This culture would bind an increasingly diverse, mobile and atomized nation until *it* became, in many respect, America's dominant ethos, celebrity consciousness our new common denominator.

Most of his detractors seemed deaf to this Whitmanesque strain in Winchell's raucous music; in time they would complain that he vulgarized and trivialized everything he touched, especially after he made the seemingly improbable leap from gossipmonger to political commentator. But Alistair Cooke, at the time the American correspondent of the British magazine *Listener*, observed the appeal firsthand when he visited Wichell's radio broadcast, which was then emanating from the columnist's vacation spot in Miami Beach, Florida. "I was astonished at what I saw," Cooke wrote.

> *It was a small studio and possibly a hundred people were in there. They were all the shapes of the immigrant poor in that sunny land...Winchell had something for them that he would never have for you and that I never dreamed of. He was the promise of American freedom and uninhibited bounce; he was Americanism symbolized in a nose-thumbing at the portentousness of the great; he realized them for fifteen minutes once a week from the fear of oppression; he was the defender of the American faith.*

Over the years, Walter Winchell would lose his reputation as a populist who had once heralded an emerging new social order, lose his reputation as a charming gadfly. He would be remembered instead, to the extent that anyone remembered him at all, as a vitriolic, self-absorbed megalomaniac – an image indelibly fixed by Burt Lancaster's performance as gossipmonger J.J. Hunsecker in the 1956 film *Sweet Smell of Success,* which everyone assumed had been inspired by Winchell's life. He would be remembered spewing bile, picking fights, destroying lives through his column. That would be the image that would finally stick.

It would stick, in part, because the public's own ambivalence toward the culture of celebrity, even as the culture continues to flourish. It would stick because of what was perceived as Winchell's own political wrong-headedness in the fifties, when he seemed to turn his back on his thirties populism and embrace the fashionable Red-baiting conservatism of the time; the image of Winchell as a journalistic Joseph McCarthy, slashing and burning his way through the American left as he had once slashed and burned his way through the right, would become almost as powerful an image as Lancaster's in *Sweet Smell*, and it seemed to wall off anything he had done before, anything he had been.

And it would stick, finally, because Winchell *was* often as vindictive, cruel, egocentric, paranoid, selfish, cheap and thoroughly reprehensible as his detractors portrayed him as being, though these qualities had once been part of his waggish appeal too....

Though he was capable of great kindness, Winchell did nothing to discourage the darker impressions of himself; if anything, he seemed to promote them. Even in his biography, which was written shortly before his death and which one might have expected him to use to rehabilitate his reputation, he snarled at the ingrates who had forsaken him. "I want them all to know that I've wearied of the mutual deception," he wrote.

...It was Dorothy Parker who once quipped, "Poor Walter. He's afraid he'll wake up one day and discover he's not Walter Winchell." After a melodramatic existence that tacked through a Dickensian childhood, vaudeville and tabloids, divorce, tragedy, suicides, betrayals, threats, and mental illness, Parker's prophecy was borne out. Winchell's life became a paradigm of what one might call the tragedy of celebrity. He lived by fame and died by neglect. He assumed a public persona only to find that the persona assumed him. And when the show finally ended its run, he was left in costume but with no role to play and nothing inside himself upon which to draw. He awoke to find that he was no longer Walter Winchell. He awoke to find that he was no longer anybody.

And yet, despite its tragic emptiness, few lives are more instructive of the forces that shaped mass culture in America than Walter Winchell's. Because he changed American journalism, examining his life enables us to understand better the evolution of the media in this century. Because he both effected and symbolized the changing of the cultural guard in this century, examining his life enables us to understand better the symbiotic relationship between the public and the famous. And because he lived the cycle of celebrity himself, examining his life enables us to understand better the mechanism by which one achieves fame and loses it, the things one gains by being famous and the things one sacrifices....

When my enemies stop hissing, I shall know I'm slipping. –Maria Callas

MISC. THINGS OF INTEREST: ROBERT WILLIAMS *Date with the Devil's Daughter* (ToneCasualties) – Some wack Sparks gone futuristic hyper-collage. **FOLK IMPLOSION** (Interscope) – Publicist Jennie Boddy says this is the thing she's been waiting for *all her life.* I don't have time to really find out if it might be so life-changing for me. She's been good to us so I'll just let her have a final word here. They're a smart band though, that's for certain. **SMASH MOUTH** *Astro Lounge* (Interscope) What?! I like them. **SKUNK ANANSIE** *Post Orgasmic Chill* (Virgin) – Funky punk hip-hoppity RNR with unique girl vocals that range from serious Tina Turner to extreme Annabelle Lwin. **NERVE GENERATOR** *This is 4-Track* And a fine four-track recording it is. It's kinda garage pop but lively with a quick sharp edge. The usual heaviness of the old fogies making this kinda music is not apparent here because these boys are cute youngsters. Teen love story movie music is what it is. **DIE WELTTRAUMFORSCHER** *Mumu* (das moniflabel) It's funny, there's an image on the cover of this CD which is kinda bubbly. Bubbles with interlinking string. Simple black and white. It's probably the CD cover which best represents the music. I don't know where you'd find this German CD. I don't know how it ended up here. A 10 for perfection in background music – if only there were no vocals. **JAPONIZE ELEPHANTS** *Le Fête Du Cloune-Pirate* (Secretly Canadian) Plot-twisting French black-comedy farce without the film. **ORANGE BLOSSOM** (Prikosnovenie) I think one of the members of the band gave this to me to review when in France on the Chokebore tour I sit through about 200 CDs one after another when I finally do these reviews, usually a few nights before printing when I have little patience for my time to be wasted. Joke bands don't go over well. Noise/techno bands aren't the best either 'cause I'm usually stressed and prone to being annoyed by it. Hmm, then again the too sugar pie extreme is just as bad. That has nothing to do with this. I was just going to say that anything in another language or with another accent besides American is usually refreshing by default. I think this is good but it's hard for me to tell because of this. **KID SILVER** *Dead City Sunbeams* (Jetset) – This jangly simple boy-sung (some girl backing) music definitely has its moments. It's cute and unique. I hear bits of Nick Cave, Robyn Hitchcock and Bono but not in obvious ways, just here and there, a glimpse, just to give you a little more to work with which won't make much of a difference 'cause what – are you going to run out now and buy this? Are you? **TRANSITIONAL** *Not even*… (pehr) – Moog over indie rock. Some X-Ray Specs vocals about. **SCARED OF CHAKA** *Tired of You* (SubCity) – American boy pop you-can-still-understand-the-lyrics punk that's not gimmicky or hooky enough to get radio play – though a few songs get close. **FUGAZI** *Instrument* (Dischord) – This is a soundtrack. Fugazi being atmospheric. Fugazi being instrumental. Actually, I have no idea why Fugazi is one of the greatest bands ever It's just the way it is. **SCARNELLA** (Smells Like Records) – Lullabies to noise. Lovin' at least every other song. On Sonic Youth Steve Shelley's label. **BLACK STRAP MOLASSES FAMILY** *Traveling Medicine Show* (Transparency) – Yeeha with a slide gui-tar, banjo, saw…you know, the works. But it's good. Dame Darcy stars – what a versatile li'l' woman! **3-HOLE PUNCH** *Greatest Hits* – This was actually one of the best sugar-pop albums of last year – even Rodney Bingenheimer thought so. What happened?

GOOD BUT ROOM FOR EVEN FEWER WORDS: ELENI MANDELL *Wishbone*; **GOD IS MY CO-PILOT** *Children Can Be So Cruel* (miguel); **DEVICS** *If you Forget Me*… (Splinter) Sweet '90s blues. **SEWER TROUT** *From the Forgotten Memories* (Sacto Punk Archives) – You were waiting for the ultimate Sewer Trout collection, no? **DIGGER** "The Promise of a Certain Future" (Hopeless) – Only pop-punk fans need apply. **PRETTY IN POP** *Song from the Films of John Hughes* (Endearing) – Only retro-pop fans need apply. But Ninety Nine doing "Bring on the Dancing Horses" sure was purty. **BLONDE REDHEAD** *In An Expression of the Inexpressible* (Touch & Go) – Fine shlt. **FLICK** *There You Go* (Columbia) – We only got this radio remix dealie but it's rockin'. Don't mind lovin' the mainstream sometimes, not at all. **TRANS AM** *Future World* (Thrill Jockey) – Pulls off electronica rock without making me have to listen with gritted teeth. Still, I like their first CD much better. **TRICKY** *Angels with Dirty Faces* (Island) – Nothing close to the greatness of *Maxinquaye* but pretty chill **FAME WHORE** (Apathy) – This movie should have been featured in this issue. For all the should-haves in my life…I'll at least give it a mention. Good movie. Amy Davis rules. CD is good too, with Dub Narcotic, Emily's Sassy Lime, Barbara Manning, and more mostly previously released material. The other thing that should have been featured is Michael Shepard's release of **NICK BOUGAS PRESENTS CELEBRITIES AT THEIR WORST** *Volume I & II* (Mad Deadly…) – Which collects all the funny outtakes you've ever heard, and hundreds you haven't, of celebrities cussing and being egomaniacal and just plain hysterical. Sound quality on some tracks leaves something to be desired but overall it's genius as shows from the high sales at better record stores, and the number of talk shows like Howard Stern who play the clips on a regular basis. And finally **OTHAR TURNER & THE RISING STAR FIFE AND DRUMS BAND** *Everybody Hollerin' Goat* (Birdman) – Got this '97 but just discovered it. Soul with fife and drums. Feel like you're on the farm with 'em. I like a lot of the blues/church music that's been mixed all techno/trance – but we don't get that KCRW stuff sent here too often. Don't know where Othar came from but here we are, giving it some fine 6-point type space

CELEBRITY SLEUTH
55

All boobies were found throughout approximately 20 issues of the great magazine *Celebrity Slueth* (and we don't feel too bad about snagging them since the whole magazine is based on their reprinting any celebrity T&A they can find). Were you able to decipher the tits? a. Cindy Crawford; b. Daphne from *Frasier*, c. Daryl Hanna; d. Demi Moore; e. Eve Ferrer; f. Gina Lollabrigida; g. Gypsy Rose Lee; h. Kate Moss; i. Mamie VanDoren; j. Madonna; k. Mariel Hemingway; l. Melanie Griffith; m. Julie Strain; n. Uma Thurman; o. Venus DeMilo.

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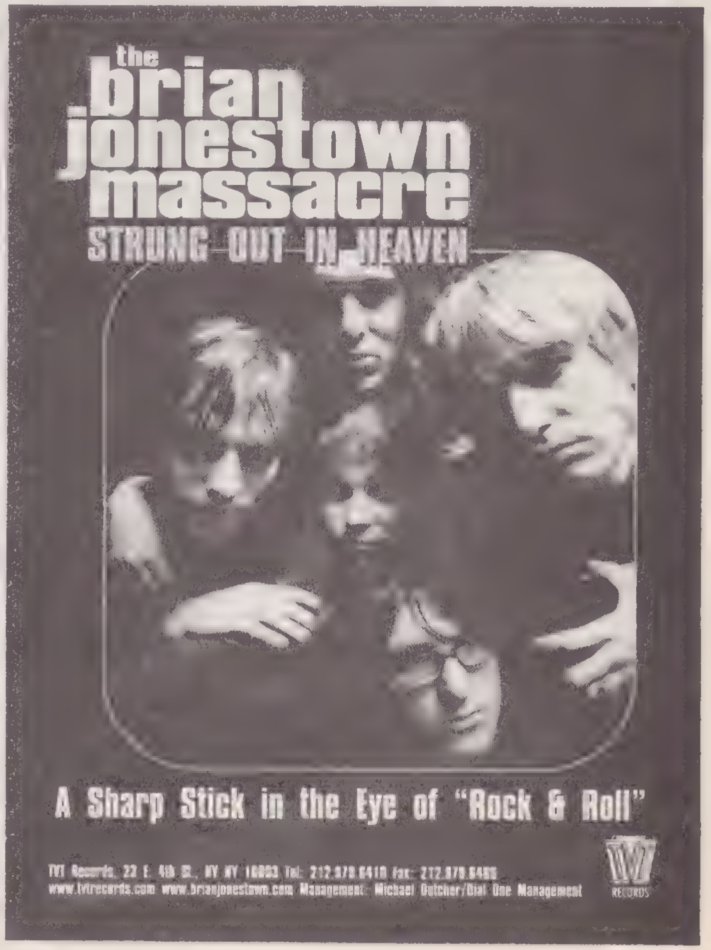

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A RAMBLING VIEW OF AMERICA

BY DAD!

IT HAS BEEN MANY YEARS SINCE I STARTED MONITORING MY HEALTH FOOD AND DRUG USAGE, DECIDING TO TRAVEL A DIFFERENT ROAD TOWARD A MORE RATIONAL VIEW OF WHAT IS POSSIBLE AND REASONABLE IN A FREE SOCIETY. I HAVE EXPLAINED THAT WITHOUT A UNIVERSALLY RECOGNIZED MORAL CODE NOTHING CAN WORK. A PRESIDENT WHO LIES TO A GRAND JURY MUST BE IMPEACHED AND THEN STRUNG UP FROM THE NEAREST TREE. A JEWISH GIRL WHO GIVES A B.J. TO ANYONE LET ALONE A GOOBER FROM ARKANSAS MUST BE EXCOMMUNICATED NOT GIVEN A LAYOUT IN *VANITY FAIR*.

EVEN THOUGH I WARNED YOU IN 1992 NOT TO VOTE FOR CLINTON I'M SURE THAT IF YOU WERE SOBER AND YOU WERE ABLE TO FIND THE VOTING BOOTH YOU DID IN FACT VOTE FOR THIS PIECE OF POOR WHITE TRASH. WHY? CLINTON REPRESENTS WHAT IS POSSIBLE WITHOUT CODES, RULES, CONSCIENCE OR RELIGION. HE ALSO REPRESENTS WHAT IS POSSIBLE WHILE USING DRUGS AND PROSTITUTES, WHEN ONE IS BACKED BY A GROUP OF GANGSTERS. HE IS THE MOVIE *THE GODFATHER* AND YOU ARE WATCHING A GROUP OF THUGS AND ROOTING FOR THEM TO WIN. HE SAYS THAT YOUR LIFE BASED ON MUSIC, HOLISTIC MEDICINE, AND NON-DEDICATION IS VALID. THIS IS THE TRAP OF THE SIXTIES GENERATION. A GENERATION, UNFORTUNATELY TO WHICH I BELONG, WHICH HAS BEEN THE MOST DESTRUCTIVE TO THE AMERICAN DREAM. THE RULES OF THE SIXTIES WERE NO RULES. BECAUSE WE DID ONE GOOD, END SEGREGATION, ALL OF THE OTHER EVILS ARE VIEWED THROUGH ROSE-COLORED GLASSES.

BEFORE THE SIXTIES YOU COULD ASK A QUESTION AND GET AN ANSWER OR A THEORY. THE ANSWER WAS BASED ON FACT THAT COULD BE CHECKED OUT AND IF WRONG CHANGED. TODAY INSTEAD OF SCIENTIFIC FACT WE EITHER HAVE POLITICAL OR CORPORATE PROPAGANDA. THE ANSWERS CAN'T BE CHECKED BECAUSE IT'S EITHER A BELIEF OR A PERCENTAGE. EXAMPLE: BY USING THE DNA OF THOMAS JEFFERSON'S ASSUMED BROTHER'S DESCENDANTS JEFFERSON HAD A 100 TO 1 CHANCE OF HAVING A SON BY HIS MOTHER'S HALF SISTER SALLY HEMINGS.

IF YOU TOLD MY GRANDMOTHER THAT 65 YEAR OLD GRANDPA JUST HAD A CHILD WITH A 35-YEAR-OLD WOMAN SHE'D SAY, "AND IF THE QUEEN HAD BALLS SHE'D BE KING." WHAT DID YOU SAY WHEN SOME LEFTIST TOLD YOU THAT THOMAS JEFFERSON (1743-1824) HAD A SON CONCEIVED AND BORN IN 1808? GRANDMA MADE IT THROUGH THE THIRD GRADE.

I HOPE YOU NOTED THAT PROBABILITY PSEUDOSCIENCE BECOMES REALITY IN THE NEWS, IN THE NEWSPAPERS, IN THE CLASSROOMS, AND FINALLY ON OPRAH.

INDIANS LOVED MOTHER EARTH – THAT'S WHY THEIR GREATEST CIVILIZATION WAS DESTROYED BY OVER-CULTIVATION.

INDIANS NEVER FOUGHT – THAT'S WHY THE VIKINGS WERE DRIVEN FROM NORTH AMERICA.

THE CIVIL WAR WAS FOUGHT FOR ECONOMIC REASONS – THAT'S WHY HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF BLACKS AND ABOLITIONISTS SIGNED UP.

RONALD REAGAN WAS A CRIMINAL BECAUSE HIS SUBORDINATES TRADED ARMS FOR HOSTAGES – THAT'S WHY GIVING NORTH KOREA BILLIONS OF DOLLARS NOT TO MAKE A NUCLEAR BOMB IS BRILLIANT.

CHANGING ONE'S NAME FROM A SLAVE NAME LIKE CLAY TO ALLY IS MEANINGFUL – EVEN THOUGH 70% OF ALL AFRICAN SLAVES WERE SLAVES TO ARAB MUSLEMS.

VOTING FOR A THIRD PARTY IS A WASTED VOTE – LIKE VOTING FOR CLINTON OR DOLE WAS SOMETHING TO TELL YOUR GRANDKIDS ABOUT. BY THE WAY, I VOTED FOR BUCHANAN THIS TIME, NOT PEROT AS IN 1992. I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE THIS TIME TO CONGRATULATE THE BUCHANAN STAFF. I SENT THEM TWO OR THREE CHECKS THAT I WROTE OUT OF MY CORPORATE ACCOUNT. THESE WERE ALL SENT BACK WITH AN EXPLANATION THAT CORPORATIONS COULD NOT DONATE TO A CANDIDATE. NO INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO CIRCUMVENT THE LAW. NO BUDDHIST NUNS. NO CHARLIE TRIE SHOWING UP WITH A PAPER BAG TO DROP THE CHECKS INTO. JUST A REQUEST TO REPLACE THEM WITH A PERSONAL CHECK, WHICH I DID.

HILARY CLINTON IS THE SMARTEST WOMAN IN AMERICA – THAT'S WHY EVERY ANSWER IN HER GRAND JURY TESTIMONY WAS "I CAN'T REMEMBER." BY THE WAY, DO THEY HAVE AN ENTRANCE EXAM FOR YALE LAW SCHOOL? "DO YOU KNOW WHAT SCHOOL THIS IS?" "I CAN'T REMEMBER." YOU'RE IN!

ALSO, BEFORE THE SIXTIES, "EQUAL" WASN'T A RELATIVE EXPRESSION, IT MEANT EXACTLY THE SAME. 2 + 2 = 4. TODAY WE ARE SUBJECTED TO ILLOGICAL RANTINGS BY EVERY NUT GROUP DEMANDING EQUALITY.

PAUL McCARTNEY SAYS HE WOULDN'T LET DOCTORS USE ANY MEDICINE THAT HAD BEEN TESTED ON ANIMALS TO SAVE HIS WIFE'S LIFE. WELL IF HE THINKS HIS WIFE IS AS IMPORTANT AS A ROACH OR RAT WHO AM I TO DISAGRE? ONE LESS BITCH = ONE MORE RAT.

ALL RELIGIONS ARE THE SAME AND SHOULD BE TREATED EQUALLY UNDER THE LAW. IF WE COULD GET SOME OF THE MEXICAN INDIANS BACK IN CONTROL OF THEIR PYRAMIDS WITH A READY SUPPLY OF VIRGINS WOULDN'T THAT BE SWELL. DECAPITATED VIRGINS' HEADS ROLLING DOWN THE PYRAMID STEPS = TEN COMMANDMENTS.

WOMEN ARE THE SAME AS MEN AND SHOULD BE ALLOWED INTO COMBAT UNITS. ARMY CHANGES AMOUNT OF TROOPS IT TAKES TO CARRY WOUNDED IN STRETCHERS. FOUR WOMEN STRETCHER-BEARERS CIRCA 1993 TO PRESENT = 2 STRETCHER-BEARERS CIRCA 4000 BCE TO 1992 CE.

INTELLIGENCE TESTS ARE BIASED IN FAVOR OF CAUCASIAN MEN. THAT'S WHY ORIENTAL MEN AND WOMEN SCORE HIGHER THAN CAUCASIAN MEN. CAUCASIAN MEN – 10% + ORIENTAL MEN & WOMEN – 15% + ALL OTHERS = UNBIASED TESTING.

POWERFUL MEN AND WOMEN OF THE PAST ARE TO BE SCORNED NOT FEARED AND RESPECTED FOR THEIR ACCOMPLISHMENTS. TODAY THE MOST FEARED AMERICANS ARE A 4'10" ORIENTAL WOMAN IN A CHEVY SUBURBAN HEADED STRAIGHT FOR YOUR '63 VW OR A BLACK LAWYER WHO SAYS HE HAS PROOF YOU'RE INNOCENT AND WILL BE RIGHT DOWN TO STOP YOUR EXECUTION.

THE SIXTIES ALSO GAVE US THE RUSSIAN THEORY THAT ANY EVIL OF THE LEFT JUST DIDN'T HAPPEN OR WAS DONE BY SOMEONE ELSE. WE DO REMEMBER THAT MORE PEOPLE WERE KILLED BY LENIN, STALIN, AND MAO IN PEACETIME THAN WERE KILLED BY HITLER, MUSSOLINI, AND HIROHITTO IN WORLD WAR II. THIS THEORY WAS BEING USED EARLIER IN AMERICA BUT ONLY BY CARD-CARRYING MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY BUT NOW IT WAS AVAILABLE TO ANY POLITICIAN WHO DIDN'T WANT TO ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR HIS OR HIS PARTY'S ACTIONS.

ALGER HISS WAS THE FIRST SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS. HE WROTE MUCH OF THE U.N. CHARTER. HE WAS A TRUSTED HIGH-RANKING MEMBER OF THE ROOSEVELT AND TRUMAN ADMINISTRATIONS. AFTER THE U.S.S.R. COLLAPSED, RECORDS SHOWED HIM TO BE A KGB AGENT. MAYBE THEY MEANT WHITAKER CHAMBERS*, OR IT NEVER HAPPENED.

THE HOLLYWOOD BLACKLIST WAS A GROUP OF WRITERS, ARTISTS, AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE MOVIE, TV, AND ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY WHO BELONGED TO THE COMMUNIST PARTY – A PARTY DIRECTLY CONTROLLED BY STALIN. NOT ONE BLACKLISTED MEMBER EVER DENIED THAT THEY WERE COMMUNISTS (SEE WOODY ALLEN'S MOVIE *THE FRONT* FOR HOLLYWOOD

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* Alger Hiss, accused by Whitaker Chambers of giving secret Government documents to the Communists, denied the charges and was convicted of perjury.

It represents a kind of celebritization of politics, the same kind of attention we pay to a celebrity like Madonna. –teacher bringing her class to the hearings for the Clinton Impeachment trial, interviewed on NPR, Jan '99

SPIN). EITHER SENATOR McCARTHY DID IT OR IT NEVER HAPPENED.

PRESIDENT JOHN KENNEDY PUSHES THROUGH A MENTAL RIGHTS BILL GIVING THE MENTALLY ILL, DRUG ADDICTS AND DRUNKS THE RIGHT TO GET OUT OF STATE MENTAL HOSPITALS, WHICH OVER THE NEXT TWENTY YEARS CLOSES MOST MENTAL HOSPITALS AND CREATES THE LARGE NUMBER OF HOMELESS THAT WE NOW SEE ALL OVER THE COUNTRY. EITHER REAGAN DID IT OR IT NEVER HAPPENED.

PRESIDENT KENNEDY GOES ON TV TO EXPLAIN THE DOMINO THEORY AND WHY WE MUST INCREASE THE NUMBER OF TROOPS IN VIETNAM FROM 80 UNDER PRESIDENT EISENHOWER TO 50,000 (LATER TO 500,000 UNDER PRESIDENT JOHNSON). EITHER EISENHOWER STARTED IT OR IT NEVER HAPPENED.

I COULD LIST THOUSANDS OF EXAMPLES FROM THE NIXON AND CLINTON FILES BUT LET'S JUST SAY THAT CREAM FLOATS TO THE TOP, BUT IN THESE TWO CASES SO DOES POND SCUM.

I'M DEPRESSING MYSELF. I GOT TO GET ONTO WHAT HAS BEEN GOING ON RIGHT IN AMERICA. CERTAINLY ANYONE WHO HAS VISITED THE SOUTH IN THE LAST FEW YEARS HAS TO BE AMAZED BY THE VAST CHANGE. IMAGINE IN A WORLD WHERE MILLIONS OF PEOPLE ARE KILLED IN CENTRAL AFRICA, YUGOSLAVIA, IRELAND, THE MIDDLE EAST, AND SOUTHERN RUSSIA BECAUSE OF MINOR ETHNIC DIFFERENCES THAT TODAY IN THE AMERICAN SOUTH POOR WHITE TRASH AND POOR BLACK TRASH CAN LIVE SIDE BY SIDE IN RELATIVE HARMONY.

UNFORTUNATELY THE PERCEPTION BY BLACKS IS THAT NOTHING HAS CHANGED WHILE FOR WHITES IT HAS CHANGED DRAMATICALLY. THE REALITY IS THAT IF YOU DUG UP A BLACK MAN WHO DIED IN 1950 AND PUT HIM BACK IN THE SOUTH TODAY HE'D THINK HE MADE IT TO HEAVEN. DITTO FOR THE JEWS, IRISH, CHINESE AND JAPANESE. OF COURSE IF YOU PUT THEM IN LOS ANGELES THEY'D THINK THEY WENT TO TIJUANA.

THE SAME COULD BE SAID FOR WOMENS' RIGHTS, NOT THAT THEY KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH THIS FREEDOM. WOMEN OPEN MORE BUSINESSES THAN MEN. THEY EARN MORE THAN MEN WHEN COMPARED WITH THE SAME NUMBER OF YEARS OF CONTINUOUS WORK. THEY LIVE LONGER THAN MEN. THEY GET EVERYTHING, THEY SPEND EVERYTHING, THEY COMPLAIN ABOUT EVERYTHING. I WANT THE NAMES OF THE MEN WHO GAVE THEM THE RIGHT TO VOTE, BUT I DIGRESS.

WELL, ENOUGH SAID ABOUT AMERICA. I KNOW THAT SOME OF YOU NEED TO KNOW WHAT ROLE MODELS AND LOVES I HAVE BASED MY LIFE ON. FIRST MY MOVIE IDOL WAS GABBY HAYES. SPORTS HERO IS YOGI BERRA. COMEDIANS OF COURSE WAS THE THREE STOOGES. FAVORITE MOVIE IS *BLAZING SADDLES*, FAVORITE TV SHOW WAS ERNIE KOVAKS, FAVORITE SINGER WAS JACKIE WILSON, FAVORITE POLITICIAN IS RONALD REAGAN, FAVORITE PLACE TO SPEND A SUMMER AFTERNOON WAS EBBETTS FIELD, FAVORITE PLACE TO SPEND A WINTER AFTERNOON IS JAI ALAI OR THE RACE TRACK IN FLORIDA. BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENT IN MY LIFE WAS THAT BEN WASN'T HOME WHEN MY SON AND I CAME OVER TO BREAK HIS KNEECAPS.

GOODBYE, DAD

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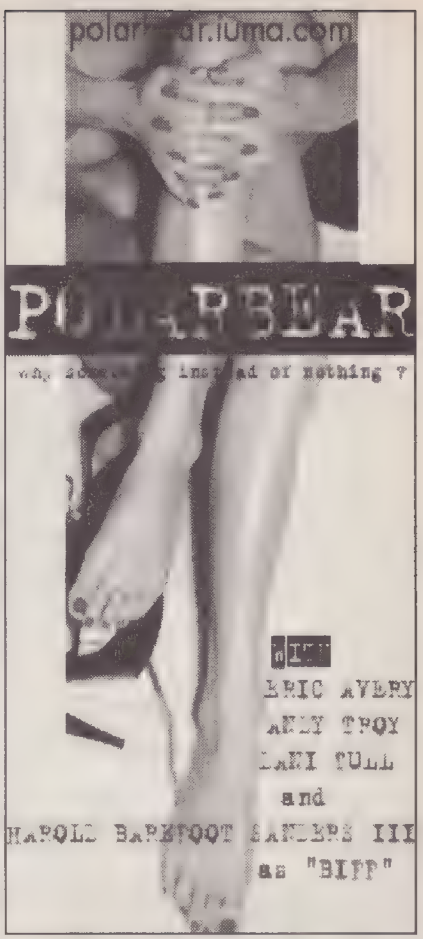

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Sticker GUY!

I'm thinking about entering politics – I'd love to do it. But I haven't got the right wife. –Mick Jagger

Retro Girl couldn't use *Ben Is Dead* to get to her true love Adam Rich (poor girl), but in her final *BID* interview, she finds a moment with...

DAVID CASSIDY

David Cassidy is blessed. At least that's what he told me during our brief 15-minute chat. All of you who are regular "Retro Girl" readers know that it was Chris #2 that got my five-year-old-self hot and bothered while watching *The Partridge Family,* but when I got the opportunity to help Dave promote his newest CD *Old Trick New Dog* (Slamajama Records), I figured, yeah, cool, let's find out if what they say about David's infamous member is true...but the best laid plans of mice and men....

DC: Hi, is Katie there?
RG: It's Katy (Caddy).
Oh. Sorry. This is David Cassidy.
I was expecting your call. I know you don't have a lot of time...
Yeah, I am running late.
OK, well I have some serious questions and some silly ones...
Shoot.
I am really interested in the psychology of the whole Teen Idol phenomenon
You are?
Oh yeah. If we had more time, I'd explain it to you, but anyway, during your whole experience, was there ever something specific that made you say "Enough is enough, I can't take this anymore"?
No. It wasn't ONE thing; it was A LOT of things. My everyday life was so insane. When you start to miss the real mundane things in life like going to the market and standing in line at the bank...I became really removed and isolated. I lived in a vacuum and hated it even though I loved making music and performing. My life was out of control. My name and likeness were owned. I couldn't live my life anymore. I had to quit. I was lost. But I quit when I was on top, which may not matter to anyone else but me, but I did. I knew I had to stop it. I have been really blessed though. If I do good work, people always want to buy my records, go to my concerts, see me when I am on Broadway. The fans are the reason I am still doing this. I have been very, very fortunate and blessed. I thank God every day for it.
You say you signed away your name and likeness. To whom?
Screen Gems/Columbia Pictures.
So you didn't make any money off of...
Nope. They made it all. They owned my likeness and put it on everything – plastic guitars, pillow cases, trading cards, lunch boxes, dresses. My mom told me my aunt was riding the escalator at Macy's and as she got off there was a huge cut-out of me with these dresses hanging there. David Cassidy dresses.
Wow. Did you have a personal favorite item that had your likeness?
No. I didn't pay attention to it. I never saw it. I didn't have to approve it. I only knew about it if someone asked me to autograph something and I was like "Where did you get that?" They didn't show me anything. Well wait...there was a beach towel once that someone asked me to sign and I thought that was cool!
Was there ever a point the you felt unworthy...
No.
...that you didn't deserve the adulation because it was based more on your looks then talent? Or it was perceived that way?
No, because there were plenty of people on TV who were better looking than me. I don't know why I got the attention or still get the attention. I am really blessed. And just lucky.
And talented.
Yes, but my fans are continually interested in what I do, and you know, I am really fortunate.
Hey you know, I saw BLOOD BROTHERS on the West End (musical David starred in with brother Shaun) and you performed the first half of the show and then didn't come out for the second half. Was it something you ate?
Oh. I don't remember. I did 800 shows.
I know. I just thought it would have stuck in your head since you only did part of the show.
I did the first half and didn't come back out?
Yeah. They announced you were too sick to finish.
I did 800 performances. I couldn't remember that.
Tell me about the current show you are doing in Vegas, EFX. Do you live in Vegas? Is that where you are calling me from?
Yes. I am based in Vegas. I have to be because I do 10 to 12 shows a week.
What is the show about?
It is a hybrid between a Broadway show and the most incredible extravaganza you have ever seen. My brother Shaun and David Chisolm, we rewrote a lot of it and really made it mine (EFX debuted in Vegas starring Michael Crawford). It is the most expensive theatrical performance ever done. I will definitely be in it until the end of the year. And just yesterday I was offered a TV show, so I don't know what I am going to do. There is a lot I want to do, work on my music, maybe tour, I would like to do a few nights on Broadway...I really need to chill a little more...I love performing, but I have to find a balance between performing and my real life.
What happened to Ricky Seagull?
The last I heard, he was a maitre'd at a restaurant in The Valley.
Get out!
Yeah, last I heard.
Do you have any of the pooka beads you wore on the show? Did you save that stuff?
No, I made those. I had a house in Hawaii and made them from shells I found there. If you go to Hawaii you can get them too.
Who would win a fight, you or Greg Brady?
Who is Greg Brady?
You know, Greg from the BRADY BUNCH.
Oh. Who would what?
Win a fight?
I don't fight. That's ludicrous.
Well, it's just that there is this show on MTV called "Celebrity Deathmatch".... (Retro Girl attempts to explain it to David, who seems non-plussed).

I know you talked about this a little in your book, *C'Mon Get Happy,* but why did Brian Forster replace Jeremy Gelbwaks as "Chris"?
Jeremy wasn't happy, the producers weren't happy with him. His mother was causing a lot of trouble so they found this blonde kid and told Jeremy to "take a hike."
Well Jeremy didn't physically look like a drummer...
I know. Brian took lessons and learned to play and took the whole thing seriously.
You have two kids.
Yes.
What is listened to more in your house, The Spice Girls or Hanson?
They're not into either. My son likes Clapton, The Jackson 5, '60s and '70s stuff, Aretha Franklin. You know, whatever I am listening to.
Does he sing?
Yes! He plays the guitar and piano. He takes piano lessons and he sings his butt off.
If you tour, would you bring him out like Art Garfunkel does...?
No. If someday he wants to, well, yes, that would be a dream come true. But he is only seven. You know he would just as soon watch baseball. He and I are both HUGE Yankees fans. I grew up in New York and my son has lived there too. Last year I took him to Yankee Stadium and he got to meet the players on the Field...
Oh wow. That must have been the best day of his whole 7 years!
The best day for me too.

And then David had to go, and I complimented him about his CD and told him I hoped to see him on tour. And no, I didn't ask him if he belonged to the Milton Berle club, cos like, how do you go from talking about your kid and baseball to talking about the size of your wiener? Retro Girl has manners after all.....

* * * * *

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I did an interview where I described her as a teacher, and she called me up and said…I should have called her an "educator"! You know why we don't get along? Because I'm famous and she's not! –Laurence Fishburne on his mother

El Vez is Alive!

BY ESTEPHANY FIDEL

El Vez is Alive! After my first encounter with him at the Laundromat out in BFE Wyoming, it was love at first sighting. Who says he got fat and died? Unfortunately, rumor has it that he's not quite the womanizer that he once was. Woe to all of us women who chase him, screaming down the runway at LAX.....

So, how many costume changes do you average per show?
Seven costume changes per show.

How do you feel about the fact that people credit Tom Jones for starting the underwear-throwing craze and not you?
'Cuz he's older, that's the only reason.

Rumor has it that you've been Mayor of several midwestern cities, a gas station attendant, and have lived on Mars. Is any of this true?
It was Jupiter.

Why Gospel?
Because Elvis loved all religions. His hairdresser, Larry Gellar, introduced him to the theologies of different religions: Buddhism, Krishna Consciousness, Santeria.... So Elvis was on the path, and I'm trying to be like the fork in the path and make all the different directions come together. There's a whole idea of Elvis being a religion, people are turning him into one, which wasn't his real idea, he was just trying to turn people on to all the different ideas of religion, and that's what I'm trying to do. So, the show is still in progress, it's kind of Judeo-Christian right now, but when we rewrite it during the tour it'll bloom into its full multi-theologistic rock show.

What's your favorite material for a jumpsuit?
Gold lamé.

How do you feel about the large number of impersonators that feel they've captured your image?
I love it.

What would you recommend to a first-time visitor to Graceland?
The workout room is really good, 'cuz I like the gold glitter upholstery on the sit-up board.

What image would your ideal black velvet painting have?
Three-headed El Vez.

Describe your bedroom.
My bedroom has a mirror on the ceiling, a headboard with the Aztec calendar and gold records on it, with big fancy brocade like Louis the XIV. A bedspread that's quilted with gold threads and it's kind of yellow with a little bit of lavender. Lots of orange and gold satin pillows. An oil lamp with a little Venus in the middle that goes around the sides and Kleenex. It's a good bedroom.

How did you feel when Lisa Marie married Michael Jackson?
Well, I thought it was entertaining.

And when they divorced?
It was more entertaining.

Do you feel that the toilet would be a fitting place to take your last breath?
Last breaths are good anyplace.

What's your favorite deep-fried food?
Peanut butter and banana burritos. Kind of a chimichanga burrito. Not a wrap!

What's the best all-you-can-eat buffet in Las Vegas?
The Rio. It's a little pricey, but it's well worth it.

What's the best taco stand in East L.A.?
The best taco stand is NOT King Taco, because they're very salty. Well, for the moment my favorite taco stand is Delta Tacos.

Where does one purchase a breakaway Mariachi suit?
I buy the Mariachi suit at Artesanias de Charro which is in East L.A., but I then have it customized by Bobby Kaminsky who is my tailor, and we supercustomize it to breakaway for El Vez.

¿Cuál es tu piropo preferido?
¿Qué?

Like, something you'd say to a woman on the street.
Chimichanga con plátanos. You call 'em food. You are so beautiful, I want to eat you.

Do you like Speedy Gonzalez cartoons?
Sure.

Are you ever mistaken for him over the telephone?
No.

What would you say to someone who called Pancho Villa nothing more than a bandido?
I would kick their butt. I would say TCB taking care of business, Latinos do it best.

Do you think that the Mexican Revolution had anything to do with the beginnings of Rock and Roll in the United States?

Everyone is born naked and after that, everything is drag. –RuPaul

It told Chuck Berry the news.

Why Obregón and not Cárdenas?
Obregón had the arm, and it worked better with the dance steps. Lots of people don't realize that towards the end, Obregón turned positive. He mended his evil ways. The religious right killed him in the end. There's the whole thing with the arm and the dance. I've seen the arm, I've been there. It's in Coyoacan, and it's on display in a glass jar, it's really great.

Do you think that Che would be a worldwide symbol of revolution if he had not been killed by the CIA in Bolivia?
Being killed is a good move. You can do no wrong when you're dead. It assures your pop stardom. Sad but true.

What exactly is the similarity between Elvis, Jesus and Quetzalcoyotl?
Son la misma.
They're all the same. Father, son and Elvis, Jesus, Quetzalcoyotl.

What do you think about Madonna wanting to portray Frida Kahlo in an upcoming movie about Frida's Life of Pain?
I heard that it was going to be Selma Hayak. I don't think that she would do it well, though.

What do you think your chances are of being offered the middle box on the new *Hollywood Squares*?
I could be the new Paul Lynde. I'm very good.

Any last words for your adoring fans?
TCB y'all!

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All my life I wanted to look like Elizabeth Taylor. Now I find that Liz Taylor is beginning to look like me. –Divine

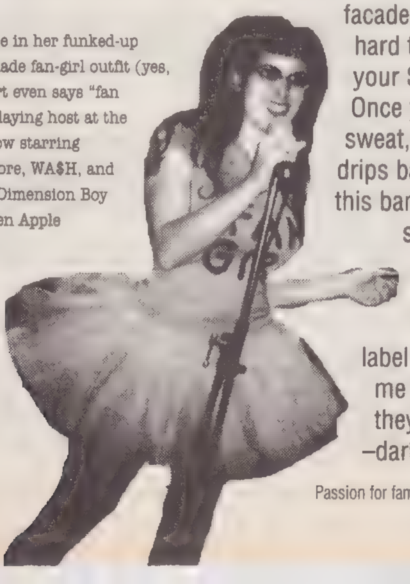
SHOW reviews

OR SOMETHING

KOMEDA

Slim's, SF

This **His Name is Alive** is not the original band. I don't quite know what they are – despite the misleading name there's not much life. They went through some transformation to oblique. Are they still on 4AD? I don't know. We haven't gotten that neverending flow of good music from the label in so long (I guess GusGus is big), but they used to be so much more dependable. But it's not the '80s any more. This is pure junk. Not as in food but like the breakdown of creativity. Wasted efforts. Incognizant and futile. The sound came out more like a first-time practice session with everyone still offkey and not totally relating to oneanother. I noticed my friend in the audience and we took our "It's-been-so-long-how-are-you"s across the street to buy over-priced gum and watch *Honeymoon in Vegas,* which was more fun than staying inside Slim's – returning just in time for **Komeda**. Even if they don't make a sound they're already more interesting. The lead singer doesn't blink. She has one face, hardly changes expressions. (Is Claire Danes Swedish too?) Same with all members, really, but especially the guitarist and her. The cute bassist with his thick accent is trying to talk about cognitive dissonance. The drummer's got an awesome bowl cut. And the keyboardist looks like zinemaker Larry Genetic Disorder as '70s geek dude. The guitarist sang out of some weird instrument that if I were more hip I'd know what it was and it made my friend Steve Martin happy. I forgot to steal the playlist, trying to remember what I did and didn't like by how many songs after a good song it was. It was all blurring together. Nothing ever totally peaked. (The boy-sung "There's a pppparty going on" is the only song I was singing in the shower days later.) The girl has only one dance to go with the one face. She's impersonal futuristic. Towards the end the facade cracks a little: it's hard to be so cool in your Swedish ski suit. Once you start dripping sweat, your humanity drips back. I really like this band's music and the show's not bad, but the CD is good enough for me. I wish the label would have sent me the new one like they promised.
–darby



Lorraine in her funked-up hand-made fan-girl outfit (yes, the shirt even says "fan girl") playing host at the *BID* show starring Chokebore, WA$H, and Wrong Dimension Boy at Golden Apple Comics.

King Diamond

House of Blues, LA

King D is still The King. Trippy evil, old-school gloom and doom, and really goofy too. Crazy face makeup, onstage virgin sacrifice, and that wailing psycho howl. His new album, Voodoo, is full of Nu-Orlins style creepiness, so the House of Blues was a fine venue, being itself full of faux Nu-Orlins's style campiness. Outside, where the smokers congregate, is a historical marker that tells the story of one Mississippi blues guy who sold his soul to Satan in 1932 in exchange for musical greatness. Seven years later he's famous and dead.

King Diamond decorated the stage with big, pointy, wrought-iron gates topped with upside down crosses. He wears a top hat and his wireless microphone is attached to a cross made of bones. His very theatrical show was highlighted by the presence of a frizzy haired woman, who came onstage during various songs dressed as a hobbled old lady, a crucified virgin, a possessed demon-dancer, and a pregnant woman who gives birth to an awkward doll.

I wore a day-glo micromini go-go dress and fake eyelashes. That went over real well in the mosh pit, but at one point I got groped, which really grossed me out, and so I split. Anyway, I'd recommend Hanes Alive brand pantyhose to anyone who finds themselves in a similar situation, unless you want to get a run. –Lisa AA

KAREN SHIKA

THE LIERS CLUB, GERMANY

IT'S LIKE IF YOU ARE THE KIND OF PERSON WHO DRIVES ALONG LISTENING TO YOUR CAR STEREO, AND THEN YOU REACH OVER TO TURN IT ON. BUT IT'S ALREADY ON. BUT IT ISN'T ENOUGH, YOU WANT MORE. MORE NOISE. MORE RESONANCE. MORE EFFECT. THAT'S WHAT KAREN IS LIKE. AND IT'S NOT ONLY THAT, BUT SHE TAKES EVERY SOUND YOU MIGHT WANT TO HEAR, EVERY STYLE THAT HAS EVER EXISTED, AND MANUEVERS IT ALL INTO A ZEN BUFFET FOR THE EARS AND EYES. IT *IS* ALMOST LIKE A FINE MEAL, 'CAUSE YOU END UP WALKING AWAY FROM A SHOW COMPLETELY FULL AND SATISFIED. A LITTLE DRUNK FROM THE WINE, A LITTLE HYPER FROM THE DESSERT. –DARBY

Passion for fame: a passion which is the instinct of all great souls. –Edmund Burke

The Creatures @ The Palace

by darby w/ selina

Siouxsie comes to town; I have to call my sister, she has to call me. It's a ritual. It's more than a ritual; it's obsession. *OBSESSION!* Siouxsie initiated us – at different stages – into a new world of music. I'm trying to get into the "intimate evening with…" at the El Ray and having no luck. Sis already has two tickets for the Palace show because she knows someone at Goldenvoice, and her friend might not be able to go. Obviously. She wasn't meant to go. We had to go together. Fate and all. Because our destiny is to spend our lives finding Siouxsie. And when we find her it'll have to be together.

When all is said, we meet at the Palace. Late enough to miss John Cale, 'cause even though he's legendary, and few there would understand to what degree, it isn't why we're there. We walk in on the first song. Such perfect timing, because we are so connected. To her. And she booms. Her voice stands out so that it can be no other person on the entire planet. She touches our hearts, because we were weaned on her, more than the mother's milk we never received. We maneuver. My sister knows the spot she needs, in front of the bar, upon a step that gives her 5' frame the extra edge. We have a clear view. Of the beauty, which was missing on her last Banshees tour, though this time it's officially The Creatures. We see her perfect figure in the much more punk rock clothes. The bondage belt. Bra with see-thru net top, vinyl skirt. A change of outfits into another small bra with beaded bra over it. Her make-up just right. She makes her death rock hand gestures. She's got life back, the life she breathed into us as desperate youth, now desperate adults. She's Siouxsie again. And we're glad, because if she was lost what would we have to hope for?

I had to move close but my shorter sister was stubborn to stay. And I dragged her most of the way to the front before she turned back. Her death rock makeup not yet damaged beyond repair from the heat. Just before the clear view of *HER* opened up. And closer I could see the difference even more. Flashback. It's not even 1986 – she's gone retro back to her old old self before I'd ever even heard of her. And she's not old anymore.

People are being pushed by the security out to the front of the club. Show's over and we're walking dejectedly towards the door. My sister's taunting me that I'm too old, and that's why I won't sneak in the back with her. Maybe I'm a little tired but I just don't want the abuse, and nothing clever has popped into my head about how to maneuver us back there, beyond begging security or knocking one of the cleaning people out and stealing their uniform. So we head to the door and I don't want to be old, really, so I grab my sister and pull her into the bathroom. At least to bide some time for my brain to come up with *some* idea. The ol' black lady bathroom attendant, the one who must have been there for at least the past decade, is inside with her lipsticks and lollipops. A couple girls are just leaving and we take our sweet old time. And when we're done she's still there but pays us no mind as we pretend to fix ourselves up in the mirror.

THEY KINDA LOOK RELATED – DON'T THEY?

"Oh, this shoe! It always does that. I need some glue." The shoe is removed for inspection. We discuss our purse and the contents, etc. "Okay, that's enough", I whisper to Selina. We peek out spy-like for the security check. Coast clear. And we go the opposite direction of the front door. There's security but now with the Pallace empty they're focused on their job, which is mainly cleaning up the place. And they're like the Borg; as long as we don't attract their attention – exposing that we're not one of them – they can't see us. But there's just no way to get to the back door, and thinking we're giving up I lead us out the side, expecting the chastising to come from my sister who wants to proceed regardless of the hopelessness. But to our surprise the gate has been closed off and the area we have now walked out into is part of the backstage. Like that.

I spy my friend and former *Ben Is Dead* cover boy SeanDeLear (see *Glamour* issue) and casually run to his side, trying to merge us into the mix quick before we stand out. He'd just spent the day with Siouxsie.

Sometimes Sean d. can be so nice; dare I say compassionate. It's funny he's become our Siouxsie connection as he was the one trying to help us get to her during a previous LA appearance (at the Wiltern – read on). "I've been friends with Siouxsie a long time" he says. He's nervous just the same. Says she might put out Glue (his band) on her new label. How they dragged him into their car last night and took him on a wild tour about the city. How they drank a whole bottle of vodka. How he couldn't keep up with them. "They're all very patient and cordial to me," he added.

I ask Sean if he finds an opportunity, could he introduce my sister to Siouxsie. (We were already warned earlier by the Goldenvoice connection that she had been taken to the beach for an interview that day and was still cranky because she was exposed to the sun.) He's amenable, and when the time occurs, when she's making the rounds, he makes the introduction. Only slight problem is that in the middle of it he has forgotten my sister's name. He could only think "Edward James Olmos" and couldn't figure out why. SELINA! "Yeah, I just saw that movie."

Well, who cares, it was still one of the most exciting moments in my sister's life.

How old are you? Where are you actually from? Was "Obsession" about you or someone or did you just make it up? How come you never play "Obsession"? Were you and Steve ever together? How long have you and Budgie been together? And when did you get married? Why did it take you so long to be signed? Was it because you didn't want to be signed to any label or were you waiting for right label or no one wanted to sign you? Are you going to have kids? Can I be your friend?

These are some of the things my sister wanted to know. But it's not what came out of her mouth. Instead, what came out of her mouth was more like: "I… I… oh… I… uh… am… the… uh… biggest… fan… you… you… when I… uh… first heard "Obsession"… it changed… my… life forever." And then she fainted – just about.*

Wow, can we say Worst Case Scenario. Siouxsie was nice about it. She let me snap a pict of them together.

"Looks like you youngified," I tell her. "Revitalized, maybe." She nodded, agreed. Budgie looked better too. What was it? Maybe they had to get away from Steve (he wasn't with them anymore). Their last show they looked like wax dolls – house of wax figures. Like when you do drugs and you get a coating, a sheen about you, especially when you're hot, sweaty. Her face is no longer long and sunken. You can see her age, a little of it, but it's beautiful.

A crowd of us stand around her in awe. If she walked north we walked north. If she walked south we walked south. We stood there asking stupid questions – you know, get them out of the way first. But we were lucky because one guy was doing most of it for us. We were glad because we could just stand there and laugh at him. But then it's contagious and you see the fun in asking stupid questions – at least he's talking to her *and she's answering!* So you want to ask the *most* stupid question. And I rack my brain, knowing I can come up with something good until…"What about Sid?" my sister beat me to it. Siouxsie looks at her stupified. Even the stupid question guy is thrown off. "He's dead," she says. We all laugh.

Luckily there's not too much of a break in-between that comment and the stupid question guy bouncing back. Here are a few miscellaneous topics off-the-cuff:

- **DEPECHE MODE:**

S.Q.G.: The singer wants to do a song with you."

Sioux: "Well, that's a one-way highway" (and makes some hand motion of moving along a highway as it would pass). ***Attention all goths! Siouxsie is not into the wimpy pathetic death drama!***

Sioux: I don't like people who try to get by on sympathy.

- **MORRISSEY**

S.Q.G.: What do you think of Morrissey?

Sioux: "Bulldog nationalist," she spits. "Morrissey's an asshole. He wanted a bulldog on the cover. He had hidden personal politics." She didn't want this nationalistic symbol on the cover of the record they sang on together. "He said 'Okay' at the rehearsal. Then he went behind my back because I'm too aggressive. How lame. He

If I'm such a legend, then why am I so lonely? If I'm such a legend, then why do I sit at home for hours staring at the damned telephone, hoping it's out of order, even calling the operator asking her if she's *sure* it's not out of order? –Judy Garland (1968) couldn't say it to my face."

- **COWBOY HATS**

She talks about the cowboy hat she wore on stage.
Sioux: "I should be an Indian."
S.Q.G.: "But you wore a cowboy hat."
Sioux: "Just to take the piss out of it."
Stuck tongue between fingers (imitation vagina).

- **PARTIES**

Some people try to get Siouxsie to come to their after-party. "Follow us," they say. "We'll make a way for you."
Sioux: She considers. "Sounds too formal. I don't want it to be a big thing," and turns them away.

- **RUDE**

A guy in bondage / chef / straitjacket kinda thing comes by. She puts down his outfit. Casually, like Hi, how you doing? "You're bad" someone tells her.
Sioux: "I know, I can't help it."

- **SEX**

My sister talks about going to one of her shows.
Sioux: "It was your first show?"
Selina: "No, it was my second show. Um, my first show was you at the Palladium.
Me: "That's like having sex for the first time, your first show."
Siouxsie and the entourage think I'm saying she had sex for the first time at that show – they get totally lost.
Sioux: "My first sex was with a tampon," she shares.
Me: "But did you come?"
Sioux: "That's very personal."

There's a lull in the room. Siouxsie is moving about, drinking her Stoli, going through clothes, personal things. Her dress is so foxy, also see-thru. She says she just got it shopping on Melrose. And her boobs. They're so small and perfect. They just sit there. My sister and I ponder this, ogling her every motion.

I have nothing to say until the ice is broken. The only way it can occur successfully, as far as I'm concerned, is by saying everything I'd rather keep private, get all this hero-worship off my chest. The reasons I should be embarrassed by being in her company.

"So, I have a story of us stalking you. [pause] It's an innocent story."

"Innocent?" she demands. "You said stalking!"

"Stalking doesn't have to be a dirty word." (Does it?)

"Okay, let's hear it."

"Well, it all started about eleven years ago…"

(What the hell. It tells the tale best. Here's an abbreviated reprint from an old issue. Now this is a Siouxsie story within a Siouxsie story within a Siouxsie story so keep it straight – my poor proofreader couldn't.)

Siouxsie and the Banshees
The Wiltern, 1996
By Darby with Selina

…About nine years ago (or so we've calculated), my sister and I made big plans to see Siouxsie together during her *Tinderbox* tour. We were so excited we bought tickets for two nights. But the most memorable one was when we drove all the way to Santa Barbara. We missed Love and Rockets though we didn't know enough to care at the time. The memorable moments of the show: #1) Seeing Siouxsie's underarm hair. #2) Her cool glittery body suit. #3) Siouxsie yelling at the guards for not letting the crowd dance – and eventually ending the show after just one encore because of it. #4) And my sister remembers fondly the "Happy House" puppets and how cute and fun they were (I doubt she'd make that up.) #5) And more importantly that she was done up Siouxsie-style. I think we were too.

We were such fanatics that we were determined to see her after the show. We went outside to the back of the theater to wait for her, thinking it was an extremely unique idea and that we were very cool, but surprising enough there were all these other fans waiting there too. About an hour into it some dude came up to us and says, 'Hey, do you want to know where the after-party is?" And thinking we were getting the inside scoop we dorkily replied, "Yes!" So he told us the top-secret information and we ran off to find her. As we walked away we turned and saw this guy was still standing by the back door but we were too excited to wonder why he wasn't coming to the party with us. So we asked some people where this hotel was that he mentioned and got directions. We didn't really understand the concept of hotels so we pulled a Mission Impossible and snuck past the concierge as he stared at us. We went to the 2nd floor, which is I think where the guy told us to go but we had no room number so we just walked around listening in at each door. At one there was some commotion (possible party) but we decided to check out more rooms before knocking. It was strange; this hotel was creepy, old, and quiet. We hardly heard a noise coming from the rooms. We went to another floor. Nothing except one where we heard some music but that's it. After an extended pep talk ("Oh my god, should we… we have to… etc."), we cajoled ourselves into knocking on the door with the possible party. This time around it sounded more like a TV and a few utterances but it was still the best bet. We knocked, waited, and a minute later the door opened. I'd love a picture of me and my sister standing there with our mouths to the floor if anyone has a copy. An old man about 50 opened the door with a smile and a cheery "Hello," and as he was continuing with, "Would you like to come in?" both me and my sister's field of vision opened up to the sight of another man in the room (I say Hispanic, about 35) on the bed in bondage gear tied up with legs spread and a collar around his neck, sorta smiling. I looked back at the first guy and stuttered, "Uh, er, um, gulp, uh, I think we um have the wrong room." He asked if we were sure and we said we were. And he said, "Well, would you like to come in anyway?" And staring at the other man we declined and backtracked away. After he shut the door and we got over our hysterics we came along a door that had a key in it. We opened it and there was nothing inside but I kept the key (my sister says it was so I would remember the night but I think I thought I was going to go back and rob the place.) We left embarrassed, self-esteem a little lower but we still didn't realize we had such a great prank pulled on us until we met these guys who told us that it was a gay sex hotel. We met these guys when my sister ran out of the car to pull a Siouxsie poster off of a pole. We'd gone back near the theater to see if there were any more great tips and there were a coupl'a wild and crazy comedians playing at a club near the show – so you already know how lame they were – and they invited us to their very own private party in their very own motel room where we went, so you know how lame *we* were.

***I WAS EVERYTHING I HATE. I'M SO GLAD I DIDN'T ASK FOR AN AUTOGRAPH.**

My sister just mumble-jumbled to me the rest of our story and I typed it in verbatim: "We were in there and they were all drunk… and they were drinking beer, there was lots of beer. And they were wanting to touch your tits - cause you had big tits then. And then one of the guys said to you to go into the bathroom with him. And I was just like, 'What are you doing?!' Like in sign language. We were all in sign language, between you and the guy doing the coke, and you telling me you'd tell me in a minute. And later I went into the bathroom and I don't know why you wouldn't know that I went into the bathroom with the dude…I was only 14 and you were just lying on the bed…and he has a line of coke on the toilet seat and I did it without telling you and I'd never done coke…I did the line, this big old line with a $20 bill and I snorted it right off the toilet seat…and I must have told you I'd done the coke then, didn't I tell you? And then we wanted to go and this guy wouldn't let us go and then we said, 'Get the fuck out of the way,' and we just left…maybe that's when I told you I did the coke…and then we went home…feeling stupid…but we had the key with us…and the poster…and the memories of Siouxsie …that would last the rest of our lives."

Well, that was a nice story sis. So why don't we tell them our new Siouxsie story? These are the key phrases that will describe the Wiltern show: Sang slow. She was in slow motion. Hard to sing along to – that was the most frustrating. "Oh baby" energy. We seat-jumped to the front so we could see her better. Her outfit. Thank god she took off her jacket but again wrong belt. Wrong pants with the wrong belt. Seemed old. Nice leg moves and flexible. Some Peter Murphy moves. Her hairdo was long thin held back in a clip. She had some whack fuckin' eyebrows. Big lumpy, wrong. No cat-eyes thing going. No eye makeup? Kinda nice seeing her without the whole Siouxsie thing on. Weird bags under eyes. Face gotten real long. Bony. Even though her music keeps going downhill it wasn't that bad. Not like she's selling out but changing. Had a fight with people over her new record so she could do it how she wanted. Some of the lyrics worthwhile.

Well, that was sure a lot easier than writing it all up. It sure was, sister. Okay then, shall we tell them what stupid things we did after this show? Yes sister, why don't we. We waited inside with Sean deLear who offered to help get us backstage since we were ill-prepared. After 30 minutes and basically being among only a few others who weren't yet inside we made friends with one of the nicer security men and he let us sneak by him. Completely retarded and spastic and certainly uncool, we ran by him only to make such an obvious scene that everyone stopped us to see our passes – and soon we were thrown out of the building. And there we sat, for over an hour, waiting patiently for someone to understand. I wanted to give up, but this is the kind of shit I go through for my sister that she doesn't appreciate. As if! Desperate we stumbled upon another man who offered us up a Siouxsie tip. Well, we were asking him for his pass but he needed it for the tour, so he gave us this key name that possibly was a code word for "Putzes trying to sneak backstage," but we ran back to the door and used it and every other name we could possibly come up with. (If he were to give us a hotel key for the Vine Lodge we were there!) A very nice woman named something like Melanie or Heather or Melissa finally let us in – we can't remember why but it was probably a sympathy thing. We walked up, cocky as hell because we had our passes, and all those mean security guards were confused and sad they couldn't kick out the groupies. We entered the "guest" room where there was absolutely no one of interest to us, i.e.: no band members. And in there we waited another hour, by this point all food and drink devoured by the very important people. It was so boring, as it usually is when you finally get into a place you've been waiting too long to get into. Sean said Siouxsie was upstairs showing pictures of her cat (who'd just died) to people – so we waited for her. And waited. Aaaargg! And waited. It's also hard to give up – like a gambler who is sure her luck is going to turn around with the next roll of the dice. Yee haw. We took our losses. We took pictures of Selina with Steve, and then with Budgie (I guess I lost them – somewhere around where that hotel key is.) And I guess we can wait another ten or so years to meet her – we're not giving up. You hear that Siouxsie Sioux?!

Yes! And it only took two more years! We finally did it. The whole reason BID existed – to meet Siouxsie Sioux. Uh huh. And now there's no excuse. Thank you Siouxsie for setting us free. The end.

I'd been thinking about the Nike ad all day. I immediately understood what he was telling me. –Michael Jackson explaining that he had sold John Lennon's song "Revolution" to Nike because Lennon's ghost told him to "Let my music live"

For the Celebrity issue of Ben is Dead, we bring you, direct from Imaginaryland. . .

1. *Near, far, wherever you are*

Hi, my name is Sally, and this is my bedroom, and these are my posters. Leo's my boyfriend, and I'm waiting for him. I've been waiting up for a while because he has to work late and tonight we're going on a date.

So I'm sitting here listening to some of my favorite songs—it's my favorite, the scene in the back of the ship where they're not supposed to be but it's really cool because Leo's like really rugged. It's my absolute favorite part.

This is really cool right here. This is the part when the big iceberg hits the ship and bow and they're not sure what happens but there's a big slice and no one really knows that they're dying yet and I'm trying to leave my evil husband—"Here I am, Jack. Here I am. Save me!"

This is my favorite part because they're in the back of the ship and they're making love. But Jack. . . I mean Leo, told me that I'm much better than Kate Winslet and he wanted me to play the part but the director said I wasn't fat enough. I was too skinny. But Leo says it's difficult for lovers to work together on screen—so we might have to do something separate after we travel to really cool far and exotic places on our honeymoon.

2. *Razzleberries and moon milk*

Hello everybody, my name is Imaginary Bear and I must say that I'm very, very excited to be here—raced all the way from Imaginaryland.

In Imaginaryland we do a lot of fun things. We fly around and we play darts—in the air with the clouds, and whoever wins gets a big heart.

The darts are made of sprinkle glitter material, called sprinkle glittle bittle fittle—and when you throw it, it makes a trail of glittle spittle. It's very hard to explain.

I would just like to tell everybody out there to not be afraid to love and not be afraid to give and not be afraid to lose and not be afraid to scream as loud as you can at the person next to you in the car if they're really pissing you off and not be afraid to add a little bit of brown sugar to your oatmeal in the morning, because it's okay to make a change. We're all rivers, and y'know, at one time we used to say "I love you with all my liver" and that's okay. It's all relative, right? And don't forget to tell your neighbors and friends that you love them.

The ongoing adventures of Imaginary Bear, Sally and their friend Richard can soon be experienced at www.transparency.net

NASTY LITTLE NIGHT OUT

BY DARBY

beastie boys
vip

$10 parking!

There's a man in line with a battery-powered fan – these people are dedicated, waiting hours for no-shows to not show so they can snatch their Beastie Boys tickets.

I weasel my way in via publicist to the (rock) stars **Steve Martin** (owner of publicity company **Nasty Little Man** – the namesake of the groups new album). Original plan, which doesn't quite come to fruition: to shadow him for a week. So far I had one drunken evening at a **Rancid** show where I hardly saw...much of anyone I must admit. A little hello to **Lint** on the tour bus but that doesn't count 'cause I already know him. Pow Wow with **Exene** and her husband **Jon**, whom I also know from their Silverlake store (now closed). And then on to **Asian Dub Foundation** at Johnny's **Viper Room**, where still adequately sloshed on those $10 doubles from the Palladium I'm now breaking bottles and glasses with my feet – not out of anger, just unchecked jubilance – in front of the security guard who doesn't notice amidst the loud Raga Brit-hop.

And I hardly see Steve.

Now night two he gets me into the Forum, where I am sitting alone in "hospitality," stealing wilted salad ("What's a meal ticket?") and not seeing hide nor hair of Martin even though I think he needs this laminate back at some point. Anyway, no one I know is here.

When Steve is back he vouches for the food and we eat gourmet and it almost makes sense for Asian Dub Foundation to thank hospitality on stage at the end of their show.

* * * * *

Steve: "You haven't been to a Forum show before? [guffaw]"
*Me: "I saw the **Campbell's Soup Champions on Ice** tour...but that was at the Coliseum. ...Oh, you mean rock shows. I think I saw **Asia** here...a long time ago. ...And **Loverboy** and the **Scorpions** – but that was outside."*
Steve: "Lollapalooza."
Me: "Yeah, I've gone to a couple large outdoor shows."

We sit with the Grand Royal folks, and I'm almost glad the change-over has been decently high in the past four or so years, as it means I have less, uh, "personal history" with the place (some things best left forgotten). That is until **Felicia Villarreal (ex-Lollapalooza)** walks in. She's **Mike D**'s newish personal assistant, and I flash back to a time when she was *my* boss, when I took on the six week job as editor of the **Lollapalooza** magazine, summer '95. "Oh, hi, it's great to see you!" You look fat, you look old, you are a two-faced bitch – don't you dare think I have forgotten! All sweetness and promises while I was editing their magazine and then the tour starts, they switch into high and mighty mode with their walkie-talkies, self-importance and regal posturing. And I'm actually in Seattle researching the Comix issue at the time of the opening concert and *Hate* inker **Jim Blanchard** drives us in his truck to the event and they don't put me on the list (please note originally they offered to allow me to go on a short stretch of the tour with them). They don't even want to allow me backstage once I do figure my way in, and condone me publicly for talking to the bands, most of whom I'm friends with, and asking them for quotes for the "Retro Hell" issue ("You need to arrange that with us *before* the show. There are no unauthorized interviews," etc.). They actually send the biggest bitch of the bunch – **JULIE ARKENSTONE** – over to remove me from the backstage area, telling me my "pass," which *they* had given me, did not allow me to be there. I start crying because I'm so exhausted and this ego-boost is just too much, at which time **Perry Farrell** personally apologizes, explaining his own hatred for these people he'd gotten mixed up with, and ever-so-sweetly loans me his very all-access pass. Hmm, now I'm remembering another probable reason why they were interested in my disappearing: Earlier Perry had asked me to take pictures of this area where, the night previous, a tractor went out of control, almost hitting a gas main and only just missing a plunge off the cliff into a gorge (the locale's namesake, and I'm not sure if it's because of this big crater or because **the Gorge** river is maybe below) – possibly killing a man – and this did not go unnoticed by **Stewart Ross**, one of the main stuffy shirts in charge and administer of bad big business vibes, as it was soon after that I was sort-of gang rushed and told to leave. Perhaps Stuart thought I would print this or somehow get them in trouble – of course the last thing I cared to do at the time was get Perry in trouble – maybe thinking so since he had tried to stiff me from my last week's pay and thought I might be upset about it. Anyway, after all this bru-ha-ha, I went directly on stage, standing near the beautiful **Sinéad** and her kid, to watch **Courtney** perform her "fuck me" set, me all big smiles at a very visibly p.o.'ed Stuart who thought he'd gotten rid of me, standing on the opposite side of this petite Irish woman. Halfway through, bored, I walk up to him and hand him the pass, "Oh, could you please give this back to Perry, and tell him thanks" – and leave their precious affair, and them to their own making.

Oh, I hath digress too much. So I keep my disgust to myself because otherwise in this context it makes no sense and we all talk about **Bob Mack** (ex-**Grand Royal** editor) – because that seems to make people feel better about themselves. His ***LA Weekly*** article on the Beastie Boys is a favored topic by Martin and a few others. We're all still a little stunned by the piece.

Bob Mack – I'm so happy to see his name in print, a cover story, on the Beasties no less – is a phenomenon all to himself. Brain spinning too fast for words, but he writes, so what do you do? Except question the ability of the editor (which is not to diss Bob because he is a great writer, and at the same time the editor probably had to skim this article off of 50,000 turned-in-words). Instead you must read it twice, to catch the innuendoes, to make sure it actually said what you thought it said. If one, myself for instance, were to write a piece about Bob it would have to be similarly honest and brutal with only the utmost appreciation. Bob loves the Beastie Boys. And I understand this weird place he's in – I also habitually alienate myself from the ones I admire most, in different ways but with similar outcomes. The byline says written by "a friend of the Beasties" but only one – Mike D. – would concede to speak with him. The question is why and will he ever again? I know Bob was invited to the show, because Steve mentioned

...You think I'm in it for myself? I'm not. I'm a Buddhist.... I turned down Oliver Stone last week! Do you know how much my value went up? My stock went up 1000 percent. I said, "No, no, I'm not interested" You don't say that to Oliver Stone. –Courtney Love (to Lisa Carver in *Rollerderby*) they had called to tell him he would be on the list, but he was a no-show. Because to know Mack is to love him (or maybe not), at least to have ever-renewed faith…shattered…until it's just too painful (though he's pulled through for me more than most of my friends. Maybe it's his optimism that slits his own throat; maybe it's something more literal).* Not that I'm in the righteous position to judge, but like many of us, Bob tends to destroy everything he's worked for, every possibility to achieve what should be a successful destiny. But no matter what the Beasties do, Bob is forever linked to them in their life story, and I think sometimes they just can't face it. *They must embrace it!*

So I digress yet again. From the eating adventure we go downstairs to the band dugout. Steve attends to business while I stand alone hoping to not get booted out – my pass is kinda iffy in this zone. Ex-American Records honcho (as well ex-Lollapalooza co-creator and all-round nice fellow) now **Artist Direct** man **Marc Geiger** talks to me. I think I'm asking him for work and talking about loving **Chokebore**, and he's telling me about a not very popular band that he is devoted to. And **Jen Garber** in tow, ex-American intern now **Ultimate Band List** matron, who created the *BID* web site initially and has achieved the supreme "behind the scenes of rock" makeover, going from frumpy awkward giant to redefined grand beauty – many a supermodel m.o.

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Me: "Is the Nanny really that famous?"
Steve: "She's on a network sitcom, what are you talking about?! [Guffaw]"
Me: "Yeah, but if you're a sitcom celebrity you're nothing once your show is off the air."
Steve: "That's true."

Pee next to **Fran Dresher**. Turned tape recorder on and she quiffed and so I turned it off. NO! She is beautiful. How does someone with such a huge hideous voice look so fucking foxy. I walk in and two very petite young girls are fixing themselves in the mirror and I walk past the pleated skirt and knee-hi's and vinyl pants and skimpiness and find an unused stall, look back to see if I'd just taken cuts and see one foxy chick dazily follow, head slanted, hair in face, and then the voice catches up – ouch! That's no little girl! A friend of mine (that would be **Troy** of **Chokebore**) told me a beautiful girl tried to pick him up in a Hollywood bar and he was all into it and then…that voice! and it snapped – The Nanny! I want to be a babe like that. It'd be my nose to snap the fantasy – the stand-out can't-hide-it-feature. The Nanny's voice is no simple piece of the entertainment world – it's real! I want to hang out with the Nanny so whatever she does to stay young rubs off on me (except the baby part – didn't she just have a baby a few weeks previous? Oh the rich and weirdly famous). I'd even jog and fuck up my knees – whatever. I don't understand.

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There are a few complications at the door Steve is trying to work out. NLM people are actually in the office by the ticket booth and these press people, who'd already been told did not have tickets, actually came anyway, saying Steve or Jessica or someone else NLM told them they were on the list. And the NLM people, standing right there, could only guffaw some more, listening to in many cases well-respected journalists (what's that mean?) like a lady from the *New Yorker* who even though confirming she only had one ticket earlier that day lies lies lies like the rest of them: "But we're supposed to have three…." And this is supposed to be a no-comp tour – one ticket per reviewer. On top of that, with all the press **Nasty Little Man** has gotten because of the "Hello Nasty" title of the BBoys album, people have been using the names of the publicists and the publicity firm, whereas before the regular public really didn't know and name-dropping usually meant the person actually did talk to someone at NLM. Now it meant nothing. Steve made sure to mention to me that $1 per ticket goes to a local charity in each city they play, but I couldn't figure how to fit it in without it being awkward so there you go.

* * * * *

We go down to find a seat – which I guess is anywhere in this area where you can find one open – and sit in the first section nearest the stage, above the general admission and VIP people zone. The Boys are "In the Round," á la the good old days of I don't know what, probably Kiss and some big rockin' '70s-'80s metal acts, which means every view is front and center, we just have the ability to get a little bit closer. I think someone stands in front of us so we stand, blocking the view of whoever's behind us – as they are sitting down. I sorta glance back and eye to Steve who eyes back "What else can we do?" And we watch from there for a while until we scam a spot closer up. From there I look back and see the person whose view I'd been blocking was that of **Madonna**. So quiet, never complaining, paying all mind to baby on lap, nibbling on each other. Maybe father of the baby by her side, not sure. It was a peaceful scene, and with her long brown hair she was beautiful from a distance hiding the wrinkles. Maybe it's the most celebrity thing I muster for this whole issue – "I blocked Madonna's view!" Maybe it only comes in close second to reading the Pulitzer Prize winning **Charles Lindbergh** biography.

Mike D says he sprained his leg but points closer to his groin. Maybe he'd lose a couple fans if he said "groin". They denounce all stage-diving and crowd surfing (even going on the radio pre-show to talk about it – I suppose since audiences have successfully sued bands for their own idiosy), but I imagine them making exceptions. Not only am I one in 20,000 with Tiger Balm, but I'm one in 20,000 that has approval to be crowd-surfing because I'm on my way to put it on for him, on his groin, because it would be *my* Tiger Balm. I'm excited, searching my bag frantically like a contestant on *The Price is Right* – oh shit, of all things, I took it out yesterday after I went hiking and didn't put it back.

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Me: "Is that ***The Captain****?"*
Steve: "Huh?"
Me: "Is that The Captain?"
Steve: "Who cares?"
Me: "Who cares about seeing anyone? Why not The Captain?"

I want not to be let into some doors. Into the back stage. I like illusions, using imagination; it's almost always more interesting anyway. And at least when I'm bored at shows I can make it a project to get past them. If I had all-access…where's the fun? A publicist with all-access – how tedious. And you can't even drink on the job.

* * * * *

Security door man to ***Tommy Lee****: "We don't give passes to people who beat up their wives."*

NLM publicist Tracey on Tommy Lee's new girlfriend: "If they were real, then I've never seen anything like that in all my life."

The after-party was celeb-packed – I saw none of them: **Leonardo DeCaprio, Jenna Elfman, Alicia Silverstone,** the singer from **Korn** and I'm sure a gazillion more besides those already mentioned (as if I would have recognized them). Steve and Tracey and I stay in the more empty of the two party rooms; I think it was just too much to cope with – wall-to-wall packed with needs. So the publicists gossip like they do so well (an all-publicist talk show – think about it, they know everything – but no shmucks, they'll only do it off the record), until people start getting escorted out of there – party's over. Steve leads us to the stairs where we're going to go down to say bye to the Boys, and Tracey and I are stopped, so we wait upstairs for him. And when the security starts to pester us too Tracey goes back to the door, me one step behind, and convinces them to let her downstairs – I can not. So I wait, and wait, kicked outside I wait some more – but long forgotten. And then because everything I write being influenced by all the moral-minded children's books and PBS shows and Disney movies from my childhood I am forced to end on the lesson learned, which is…I don't particularly like these kind of celebrity-attracted affairs, I don't seem to enjoy myself, I never learn anything (except if it's relearning all this), and finally that no matter how hard I try or don't try…I don't fit in. ■

A celebrity is someone who no longer does the things that made him a celebrity. –Pat Bracken

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* I hear Bob is now successful & happy as the token cigar-shop indian @ *Vanity Fair* & all the luck Bob – you rule!

Carla Bozulich

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thing." We had a tremendously amazing contract. The shiny silver contract – it was just so beautiful, it brings tears to my eyes, how totally protected and safe we were on paper.

On paper.

And financially. We had it made, we really did. He said "You can have that whole contract but all for yourself." Which would have meant for me that I would have made $350,000, just boom, by signing that thing. By agreeing. Yeah, drop the band. Okay, (sly whisper) *yeah yeah, go ahead you drop the band and then sign the blah blah blah okay that'll be great.* But I was just so grossed out by this that I felt like I was going to throw up. And I just said, "No, I can't." And so they dropped the band. You know, he said he wouldn't. He had a meeting with all of us, a whole lunch with everybody in the band, and said: "There's no *way* we're dropping the Geraldine Fibbers. It's decided. We're keeping you. You're doing your third album for sure."

And then what, he just left a message on the machine?

Actually, yeah. It's funny you guessed. It was just so classic. I'm not even complaining – it's like I'm part of a cartoon. And the thing is, really, we made a lot of money, we were supported for four years…

Was it really that long?

Four years and we did our music. We did what we wanted to do. Those albums that we made were exactly the ones we wanted to make. We didn't compromise anything. We made the albums we wanted to make and we were allowed to tour on them and we lived for four years without having jobs. I mean that's great – that's totally great, you know. The only thing that's bad, it's hard to know where to draw the line when you're immersed in a vat of snakes. It was just so dirty, scummy, sleazy all the time and people lying and people say things to you and they have *no* intention of carrying out what they're saying, they're just fuckin' blowing smoke up your ass. But you're getting paid big time so maybe that's fine – isn't that what everybody does at work? Like everybody hates their fucking boss, there's some jerk by the water cooler grabbing their ass, the whole thing. That's never happened to me, thank god, in terms of music, but I know a lot of women where it has. Where somebody has told them that they should give sexual favors and they'll get ahead more.

And does it work?

Courtney Love is doing pretty well.

You want to go into detail?

No. *I'm just kiddin' around. Just shootin' the breeze.*

Right by a waterfall – that's where you shoot the breeze I think. So you've had other opportunities, where things were presented to you, and you have almost instinctively turned them down as well.

Yeah. And everybody is laughing at me now. [laughs] But let's not get into that, because I don't regret it, I'm happy. I feel like I have a challenge in front of me of how to support myself, 'cause I'm 33, I want to make a decent living. I love to garden, I love my cats, I love to cook, I want to be able to keep doing those things and it's not something I'm going to be able to do if I'm all fucking poor again. I don't want to be all poor again. I like not being pathetic.

So you want to make money through your music and then you turn down the things that would make you money, so what are your options?

Well, that's what I'm saying, that gets you around to the whole creativity aspect of making money, you know, and I guess also to have faith that I can keep making the music that I want to make and not expect to make any money off of that music, and I need to have a whole other side that does something else…

And not have it be music.

Not necessarily not music but not real music in terms of my heart, and not something that I have to perform.

So that you're not totally associated with it.

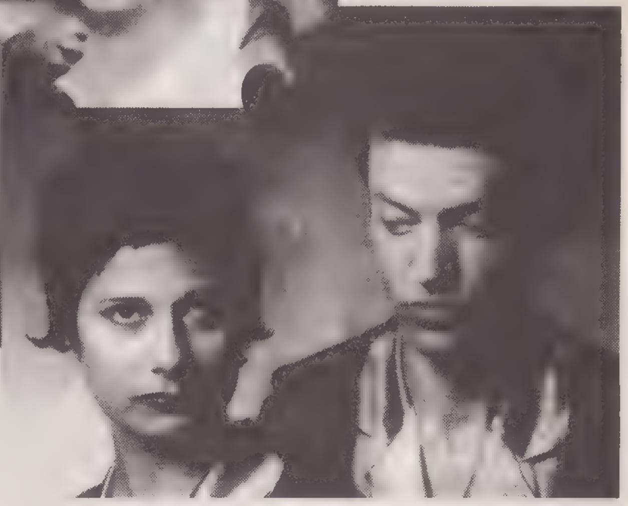
I don't want to be associated with it necessarily or not but I just don't want to use…for me to play the music or sing it, I'm really a corny person so I'm sorry but it's my heart, and I don't want to sell out my heart anymore. I've done that in my life before, I mean not with music but in other ways and I'm through with that.

Well, I want to bring these two things up…

RIGHT: Still photo from the "California Tuffy" video, directed by Curla Bazoolich. "It's one of the things I am most proud of pulling off."

FAR RIGHT: Scarnella imagery by Leyna

ABOVE: Carla & Fibber violinist (& *BID* contributor) Leyna Marika P. before the Fibbers played live on French TV. Photo by Nels



RIGHT: Carla + Nels = Scarnella
Photo by Howard Rosenberg

I've had many opportunities to be a celebrity.

I like the Garbage one.

Don't say this in the interview.

Why?

Because I think it's disrespectful.

You don't have to say the reason why you didn't want to do it, but the part I find interesting…

'Cause I think they did a really good thing with that, I really do.

What it turned into?

Yes.

So then why can't you say what you thought at the beginning and end with that. Because I don't think their stuff is that bad. I like a lot of the shit on mainstream radio.

So do I, all I listen to is Power 106.

Well then, I don't think it's bad to say they asked you to try out. Isn't that what it was?

Mmm hmm.

The reason I'm bringing it up is because when I hear her [Shirley Manson] singing I always think of you, because there are so many parts in the songs that sound exactly like your voice. They found someone that sings very similarly to what they were looking for in getting you to sing.

That's flattering. But I think she's so incredibly perfect, isn't she? She's flawless, for what she's doing…

Yeah, to get a band of all ugly old guys to look good…

Oh no, I feel really bad, this is *bad.*

What? You didn't say that.

Oooh.

They are. And they made the band so they could make money and they did it.

That's true, they did it.

They found the perfect person to pull them through that, because they needed someone that had a lot to be able to do it.

Yes, well anyway, it's perfect. And it's so much better than what they originally…They did a *lot* more with it. They made it into something that I couldn't foresee with the demo tape. It was really not good. [Carla makes a face]

God.

I feel bad, 'cause they were so nice.

You can still have an opinion and think they were nice.

But talking about it in an interview is tacky. It's fucking bullshit. It's mudslinging.

What are you slinging? What did you sling just now?

Snot.

Yeah.

Anyway, I could care less about Garbage. I just don't like that kind of music anymore – not that I ever did, but I really don't now. I just don't care. I don't care about rock music except in very rare occasions. It just bores the hell out of me.

Do you want to mention how Jason Cherkis fucked you over?

(Who is Jason Cherkis? Carla explains: He's the author of an unethically written exploitation piece that started a domino effect of writers reprinting time and again portions of the idiotic article in which he co-opts a piece of prose I wrote for *Ben Is Dead* years before, taking parts of the story and pretending I said them to him in an interview. He was also responsible for the mythical image of me as a leather-clad dominatrix in Ethyl Meatplow that annoyed me every time it was subsequently parroted by other misinformed writers. Calling the editor to point out that I felt tricked and molested by this kid who had promised several times to base the story on the actual music instead of my checkered past, the man in charge of *Option* magazine – I forget his very important name – told me that we were lucky to even be in the magazine because we were nobody and I should be grateful. It's true, we were too small to warrant a three or four page article in a mag that usually only covered the mainstream underground – the Fibbers at this point had only been together a few months. It became obvious during the interviews, but certainly upon reading the published article, that Jason Cherkis had stumbled upon my *Ben Is Dead* piece and saw an angle worth milking. Thus, he embarked on an approach to journalism the trailblazers at *Spin* magazine exercised on the Fibbers a few years later, again giving up valuable ad space on a band too small to attain multi-page article status based solely on their music. They clearly loved the band, but I think they needed an excuse that would interest readers with a craving for dirt who could care less about some tiny art-rock band. I imagine something like this: Hey! The whole junky thing is very pop right now, I can tell by listening to the lyrics that there's got to be incest back there somewhere, too. Get her to talk about it. If she won't, tell her that the editor won't go to print without a quote on this. What? She said although she hopes that "Toybox" is the world's greatest daddy-bashing song, it's not about her real daddy? Let's just lose that last bit. What? She wouldn't give you that quote until you swore we would only print it coupled with a statement that her father, Paul Norehad, was not the daddy she was bashing? Excellent work! And we'll take full responsibility for vetoing that promise. That's what editors are for! They're lucky we're even mentioning them in such a crucial publication as this. By the way, I don't think emphasizing the fact that her drug days ended a decade ago would be, how shall I say...good copy.)

No, I guess things like that don't matter, because I'm no longer in the Music Business.

Then I suppose the only other stuff…are there people that did make it as celebrities that you think kept their…trueness?

Lili Taylor, Angelica Huston, Charlotte Rampling. I kind of like Kevin Spacey, don't you? They're all actors. Well, Sonic Youth. Um, the Make-Up, Tom Cora, the Fall [we have to laugh] – no actually that's a sad story right there. My favorite band.

Yeah, ultimately mine too. We'll print that interview in *Notebooks.**

---

* When we had the opportunity to interview Mark E. Smith a few years back I got scared so I tried to invite someone to go with me. Carla & one other person called back both excited so I told both to come. When at the restaurant Mark's publicist informed us he would only dine w/ two. I ended up at the other end of the place, paying for my diner & not being able to meet my most favorite rock star. The interview odd so we never ran it – though maybe I'll put it out in a "Ben Unpublished" or something, which would include Brix Smith [who I got to interview about a year later], Jesus & Mary Chain, Ween & a couple others

The reasons John Napier quit Ethyl Meatplow: Carla's red Hagstrom guitar. "I will always think of John as one of the most rad musicians ever. He definitely turned me on to the whole twisted electronic/sampling thing, which has been an obsession ever since. And there was something amazing about Ethyl Meatplow beyond the sheer demented fun and the never knowing what was going to happen. John and I had a way of harmonizing that you won,t ever hear anywhere else. He first blew my mind when I was 16 or so with his band Incest Cattle, then the amazing Here Eat This, then we did The Hell Raisins together, some of which turned into Meatplow. I never saw Buccinator or E-Coli because I was too fucking pissed at him, but he is consistently amazing in his sick creativity, so I'm sure they were cool. I guess he's got a group now that he's calling Ethyl Meatplow, which I think is really pathetic, considering that he is capable of phenomenal invention. I don't know who's drumming, but I know that NO ONE could do all the shit that Biff was doing and play like a wild devil. It seemed effortless. I'm told that the girl who's singing in my place *knows* her place, which I never did, and that she's about 20, cute as a bug and has got a really good voice. Sign 'em up!

Pablo Neruda. What's her name that directed *Sweetie* and *Angel at My Table* and *Portrait of a Lady* and *The Piano?* (Jane Campion) That director. Oh, you know who else, the guy who…is it Tim Robbins? Did he do *Bob Roberts?*

Yeah.

Him. What's her name that sings…God, where the hell are we in here. What happened to us here? [There are suddenly fifty young girls playing in the pool below the waterfall.]

It's called the mauling.

Mahler.

(Laughs) Let's leave that one at that.

Oh my gosh, the big black lady who sings "Pirate Jenny" – but a lot of people sing "Pirate Jenny" – and she sang (singing) *My name is Peaches. Peaches!* No, she has that voice that sounds really like a man, really really like a man. She sings a lot of songs about being a black woman, about being oppressed. Okay. Martin Luther King. Redd Foxx. Um. *My name is Peaches.*

Are there any young singers today…?

Singers? Chan Marshall, Cat Power. But what's the question again? 'Cause I know I love her but…She's a celebrity to me. But can she handle it, I don't know.

Chokebore toured with her in Europe the last time.

(pause) Uh huh.

Just get that in there. She makes your hair stand up?

Oh, but in a great way. I love her. We're like sisters. I think I might be really scared to talk to her if I didn't meet her the way I did. Which is, I loved her first album and called her and asked if she would open for the Geraldine Fibbers and I just fell in love with her. I hate to say this, 'cause it's fucking lame, I don't have that same feeling if I meet somebody in the context of opening for my band. And she toured the West Coast opening for us and when she played in LA nobody knew who she was. She definitely was not well-known then, so it was easier for me. But I mean, it's embarrassing for me to even say this, because I don't even know why a person would be like that, like what my problem is, but I know I don't like it, whatever it is. I think a lot of it is I don't want to treat people differently so I cop this attitude and therefore treat them differently. And I don't want people to treat me differently, and that's one of the things that scares me, or used to scare me when I used to think that we might become successful and well known, and I couldn't fathom the idea of being treated differently, just because of that. And I knew that I would be, because I guess I know that I respond that way to celebrities. I'm afraid of celebrities. Like I saw Kathy Bates at Home Depot once and I love Kathy Bates but I couldn't even say hi. I could never, no way. We played with Nick Cave once, and I couldn't say hello to him, and we were in the same dressing room area. But I can't, I'm too shy.

In this regard.

Yes. Um, let's see. I like PJ Harvey, in terms of famous singers. There's nobody that's like really massively famous – well that's not true, Busta Rhymes. There's a lot of people like that, a lot of rap singers I really really like a lot. I guess rappers – not really singing all that much.

It's almost easier for them in a way, 'cause they embrace that whole dynamic [of celebrity] better then most of the other groups. Like, they don't hide the fact that they want a Lexus. They're not ashamed of the fact that they want the money. And it's almost more honest then pretending that that's not what you want. They want to be looked up to, the power…And our whole indie culture background, where you were saying you kinda work against yourself in a way…

Yeah.

Yeah, there's something that holds me back, 'cause that's the background, this thing that makes you think all celebrities are fucked up, anyone with money is bad, or that they're part of the "establishment." When it's really this thing that's been created to keep people sorta repressed in a way.

By having the celebrity you sort of had in Ethyl Meatplow and all that attention, did it help you go through…?

What celebrity?

Well, you were on stage all the time with every guy in Los Angeles in love with you.

I thought it was just the girls.

Was there an aspect at that point of celebrity that might have helped you overcome your shyness, or your development in other ways?

My boobs got a lot bigger.

When you look back at that period of semi-celebrityness what did it add…

Okay, did you think that was a more celebrity thing than the Fibbers…or you're just asking about that period?

No, well on the West Coast maybe.

Can I tell you something that was really bizarre? Ethyl Meatplow. I never perceived us as being celebrities, except in the Midwest. We were rock gods in the Midwest. WE WERE ROCK STARS IN OKLAHOMA BABY. KANSAS LOOKOUT! LOOKOUT KANSAS! The Bible Belt man, they loved us. They did.

So was it good for you?

Yeah, it was really good for me. Ethyl Meatplow was so funny that way. It had a lot to do with that. I was a shy awkward person and it was a bold project. It was bold and funny and fun and physical, sexual, all the things it's scary to be. And you know, really really uncool in terms of indie cred kinda stuff that was going on at that time, which made it all the more fun. And it was really good for me in that way. I did come out of my shell quite a bit. It was funny 'cause it was just a character. It wasn't like I was acting, but this thing would come out of me.

Like liquid out of your vagina.

Shh. Let's not dredge that up again.

We can't dredge up anything you ever said in *Ben Is Dead*. Do you find yourself still wanting of the stage thing? I mean is that a portion of the playing of the music for you?

Well, okay along the lines of your last question and this question too, is that when I stopped touring a year and a half ago, I had been literally touring the whole time, except when I was recording, since 1989. I hadn't stopped except to record. And so, I had no idea how to live without performing constantly. And driving. You know, get in a van, drive to the next state and play six or seven shows in a row, or nine or ten. And I stopped that a year and a half ago after the last Fibbers tour. I mean Nels and I have done a couple tours but we don't have a van anymore so it's hard to get that together. And I had this shift inside of myself. It took me a while but I realized I had been depending…like part of my feeling or image about myself, was totally hung up in being validated by the audience and people that would talk to me after the shows and people would tell me how much the music meant to them, and stuff like that. I had no idea; I wasn't in touch with it. There are a lot of people that really are in touch with that all the time but I wasn't consciously thinking about it. And then, after I hadn't toured for six months I found myself really devouring each and every little fan letter I would get, and I'm like, What am I doing?! I would be going to the PO Box and just read the mail right there in the car, in the parking lot. And I realized I was starving for this particular, very very bizarre kind of attention and love. So that's embarrassing for me to admit. That's my embarrassing admission for the day. I think maybe there were a few of them, actually.

Aside from all of that, there's this really strong thing that happened to me, and everyone that plays music. Like when you exercise heavily and you get that endorphin rush thing, it's kinda like that. I miss that. I miss that feeling. It's like an exhilaration. It just takes you out of your body. It's a way for me to…

Feel alive.

No, I feel alive all the time. 'Cause I don't use drugs and I don't drink and I don't smoke and I don't drink coffee, so for me it's a way to actually have a reprieve from my normal dimension that I function in, in terms of energy. I feel I can almost get out of the physical aspects of my existence, if it's going real well. If it clicks. Which is not every show. Maybe like every five or six shows, I realize I'm somewhere else and that I'm not coming down. Like something pops through. That [comes with] music with a hard edge. It has something to do with expending energy. Like when you run. When you climb up a rock – that's what we're doing.

Yeah, I know the pop.

Yeah, the pop.

The pop is what it's all about. I like the pop the best. But I consider that's when I'm truly alive. I get the pop and try to contain it as long as possible.

Hmm.

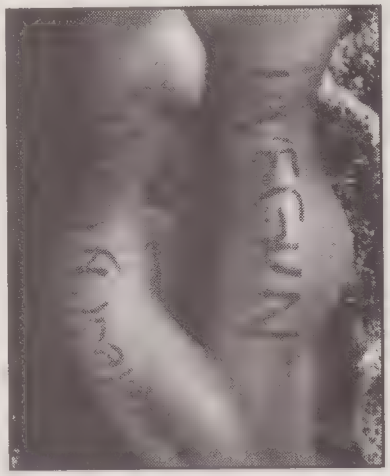
Yeah, everything's alive and awake and aware and conscious. I think that's real living.

I like that. But it's not something I can maintain for very long.

It's very hard.

It's sorta like if you were climbing straight up. You can't keep climbing straight up the whole time.

Today Carla lives in a cute woodenly cottage very east of LA with her beau Nels Cline, and the three cats: Runaway, Shy-Girl, & Tuffy. She and Nels play together in Scarnella.



The "Sex" issue photo shoot at the nude beach. Woo-woo!! 1992. Photo by Don Lewis. (What, you didn't know Carla was the nekid girl [@ left with Steak, right] on the cover?!)

carla's music bio

- **Neon Veins** 1983-4 with Gary Kail, Rich (Polysorbate 80) Costigan, Dan Dobren
- **Invisible Chains** 1985 or 86 – Joey 8's band in it's umpteenth incarnation before he died. With Kevin Woods, also dead now, and the beautiful Rich Costigan.
- **Ethyl Meatplow** 1988-1994
- **The Geraldine Fibbers** 1994 – "I'm gonna start writing the new album towards the end of this year. Yeah, I heard we broke up too, but you can trust me on this."
- **Scarnella** 1998 & onward – "The exploratory project where often the entire show is made up on the spot. Plus non-rock songs that show how feely I really am. This project saves my (creative) life."
- **Destroy All Nels Cline** 1998 & onward – "The instrumental six-piece playing works that move freely between Nel's heavily orchestrated composition and experimental improvisation."
- **Underthing** – "My new project that will be a psycho-electronic, song-based thing where I'll be conducting a subterranean-pop substitute for substance abuse. Since I don't know them, I have to publicly thank the now-defunct LA band The Underthings for having such a great name. I always loved it. Hope you don't mind too much, it's just that it's so damn…me."

Performers and their public should never meet. Once the curtain comes down, the performer should fly away like a magician's dove. –Edith Piaf

CLASSIFIEDS

OUT OF THE WOODWORK COMPILATION CD - 24 punk, ska, and hardcore bands you haven't heard yet but all kick ass, so don't pass up this chance. $4 ppd (checks to Franco Ortega) to Grub Records, 400 Park Rd, Parsippany, NJ 07054-1737.

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errors

- Howard was too scared to talk about smoking pot with the Power Rangers and this always bothered me.
- I forgot to print Lisa AA's anual Ozz Fest show review and just stuck in the rad picture. But it's so dated, I'll just stick it on the web someday (sorry baby).
- We didn't do the Phil Hendrie interview. My greatest regret. Maybe someday, for someone else. He is a rare genius.
- Here's some of the errotica that ended up missing from KAREN ENG's sex comix article: Books by European artists Manara, Crepax, and Giardino are among the staples of the adult graphic-novel shelves. Aesthetically refined, literary, and sophisticated, these artists' works are hugely popular and – because they're easily accessible – a good place to start if you're new to sex comics. Milo Manara, "who has been called the 'ultimate artist of the beautiful woman in ecstasy,'" is probably the king of the genre with his *Click!* series. If you want to know what kinds of comics Manara likes, go to his very own whimsical Web site at www.milomanara.it. *Little Ego* by Italian cartoonist Vittorio Giardino was probably the first sex comic I ever picked up. A charming parody of *Little Nemo in Slumberland*, every episode has the innocent heroine dreaming ever more erotic and unlikely dreams. Upon waking, she unfailingly resolves to tell her therapist. My favorite episode is when animals start appearing in her bathtub – a frog, and then an exceedingly sexy crocodile with a big grin on his face. Actually I just have a thing for reptiles and amphibians, so. Guido Crepax is famous for rendering erotic fiction in graphic novel form. His line drawings are looser and nowhere near as pretty as Giardino's or Manara's, but they also have a distinctly modern, experimental feel to them. His most famous work are the *Emmanuelle* and *The Story of O* series, and his version of the Marquis de Sade's *Justine*. Last Gasp is now publishing a line of European erotic comics under the imprint Priaprism Press. Look for the *Troubles of Janice* series and *A Very Special Prison* by Erich von Gotha. Priaprism's format and aesthetics are similar to the Eurotica books mentioned above, including excellent art, but the stories are more explicit. Exciting, no?

RETURNS:

Kim Forretta in the United Kingdom, Keith Leorretti, Norman Kee…plus a bunch of prisoners. Subscribers you MUST send us a change of address because bulk mail WILL NOT be forwarded. • There are a number people who didn't get their shirts or stickers because we either have an old or inncorrect address. We would like to remedy this situation. Please contact us: Todd Johnson, David Hodge, Claire Miller, Tinselvania, Eric Corey, Erica Kestenbaum, Carissa Hoschette, Jose Ornelas, Asa Cannell, Bruce Rod. And B. Rapner, Mike Valdez, Ben Gertzfield – did you get yours? I can't tell from these notes. Apologies and gifts for all ya'll. • If you ordered something and never got it, please let us know via email to benisdead@earthlink.net before Jan. 1, 2000. If it's the Kiddie Comp CD you should have it the end of summer '99 and you're a darling for being so patient! Please note new ordering information on page 4.

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FORMER CHILD STAR CENTRAL Our focus is the tube stars of the 1960s-1980s — a generation's virtual peers. As children, we were captivated by their surreally perfect TV worlds. As adults, we are drawn to their all-too imperfect grown-up lives. Say the words "Dana" and/or "Plato" and you have our undivided attention. Why? Morbid curiosity. Smart-aleck crassness. Maybe even a touch of concern. Take your pick. Sightings, Job Bank, News, Links, Missing Persons...all at http://members.tripod.com/~former_child_star/index.html)

THE FOLD "the club comfortable within an age of contradiction, defining the southwestern silverlake sound for nearly two years" booking/info: Scott Sterling fold@loop.com

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BAD CELEBRITY POETRY

by Lisa McElroy
(unless otherwise noted)

(INSPIRED BY JEWEL)

Keanu Reeves 1990

Scruffy like a stray
Dirty stained-brown suede
Nice but kind of crazy
I'd rent shoes from you
Bowling alley baby

Bruce and Demi

Too many floppy films
for two to handle
Too many pregnancies
Too many hairs lost
And so much silicone
for two such as you
Misty, water-colored
Republican melt-down

Maria Shriver

Arnold doesn't care
like I care
Eat more food

Pamela and Tommy

Pregnancies did not agree
with Tommy Lee
Truly he is Mötley

Don Johnson/ Nash Bridges

Egg yolk yellow Barracuda
careens through North Beach
Turning $an Francisco
into Dan Tana Land
Thanks for calling Cheech a grape
And saving us from those
Asian gangs
asshole

Woody Allen

My dad looks like you
I weep in the mirror
Knowing I will too
(By Kevin Sampsell from his book Haiku You*)*

. . . . .

Added Bonus! I found this on a Motley Crüe Web-site. I love the web:

MC THOUGHTS

By Jenn 'the Crüegirl' Neil

The following is about how I feel about Tommy Lee recently going to jail. I will support him through everything and anything. I've noticed alot of people are taking sides.. sayin' they hate Pamela or lost all respect for Tommy. But they haven't heard Tommy's side of this.... so how can they take sides? I'm not taking sides. I love Tommy and like I said above I will support him through everything and I am depressed about him going to jail because I love him.. and always will. But I don't hate Pamela for this either. I'm a fan of hers too and I don't see why I should take sides because I don't know the whole story. My heart goes out to Brandon and Dylan because they can't see their daddy. And I know Tommy will miss his sons alot. I'm going to do the best I can to show Tommy how much I support him by writing letters and doin' things like that. Hopefully most Crüeheads support Tommy too. And if they don't I don't consider them a "real" Crüehead. Crüeheads stick with the Crüe through all the good and bad times. Sure, if Tommy did do this it's not right and I know he's really sorry. But there is more to this story.. even Tommy said so. So if a so-called Crüehead decides to not support Tommy and the Crüe about sumthin' they pretty much know nuthin' about then that's just stupid!! Well that's just my opinion of the Tommy topic.....

. . . . .

also by Jenn …

Vince my love, Vince my sweet
I love you babe… ooh won't you be mine?
In the heat of the night your sultry lips
taste so good Always and forever I'll love
you till the end of time

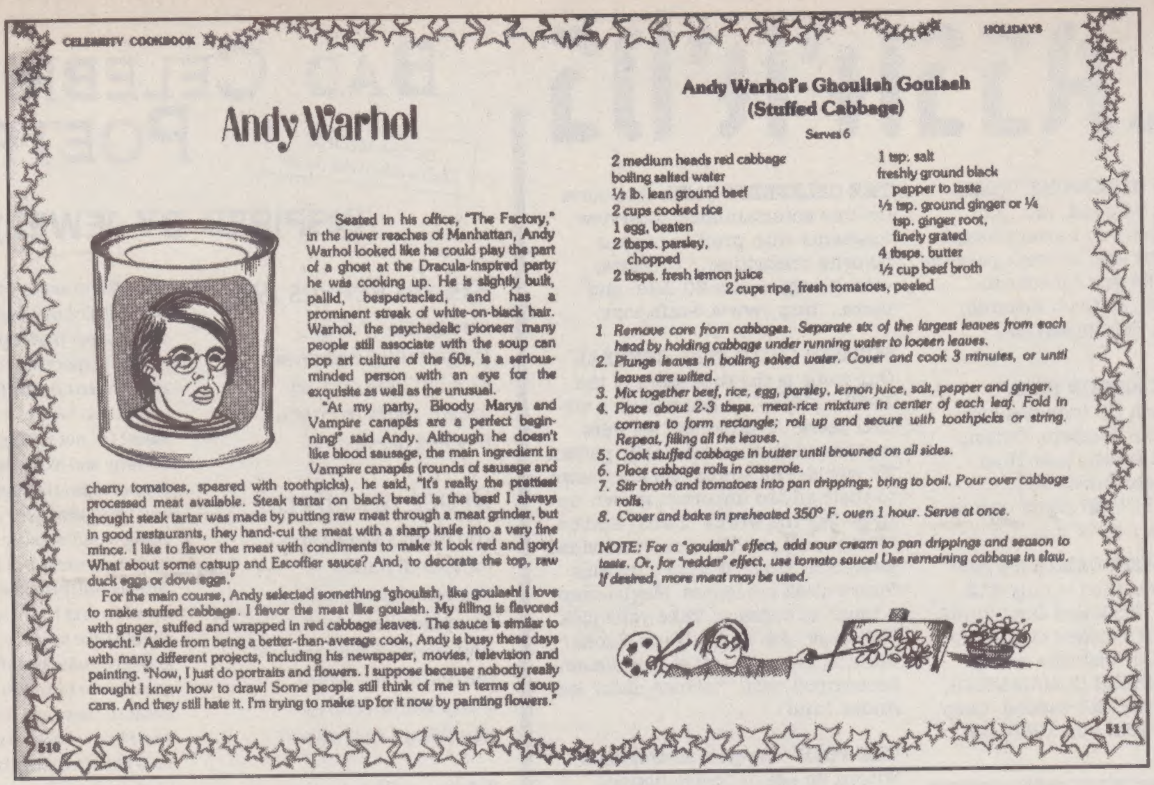
You stole my heart
Like a thief in the night
What is life worth,
Without having you in my sight?

Your soft spoken words
The thrill in your scream
Makes me feel so good
Or is this just a dream?

Looking in your hazel eyes
Is like getting lost in the sky
I can be the girl you want
Honey, just let me try

Words? Actions?
They can't describe how I feel
My love for you is so strong
It is unreal
I love you, I want you
I'll be yours till the end of time.

Sorry to all contributors whose articles we had to cut at the final hour (including the whole zine/book review section). We could have waited another year to find the $ to print eight more pages but… GOD BLESS YOU!



CELEBRITY COOKBOOK

Andy Warhol

Seated in his office, "The Factory," in the lower reaches of Manhattan, Andy Warhol looked like he could play the part of a ghost at the Dracula-inspired party he was cooking up. He is slightly built, pallid, bespectacled, and has a prominent streak of white-on-black hair. Warhol, the psychedelic pioneer many people still associate with the soup can pop art culture of the 60s, is a serious-minded person with an eye for the exquisite as well as the unusual.

"At my party, Bloody Marys and Vampire canapés are a perfect beginning!" said Andy. Although he doesn't like blood sausage, the main ingredient in Vampire canapés (rounds of sausage and cherry tomatoes, speared with toothpicks), he said, "It's really the prettiest processed meat available. Steak tartar on black bread is the best! I always thought steak tartar was made by putting raw meat through a meat grinder, but in good restaurants, they hand-cut the meat with a sharp knife into a very fine mince. I like to flavor the meat with condiments to make it look red and gory! What about some catsup and Escoffier sauce? And, to decorate the top, raw duck eggs or dove eggs."

For the main course, Andy selected something "ghoulish, like goulash! I love to make stuffed cabbage. I flavor the meat like goulash. My filling is flavored with ginger, stuffed and wrapped in red cabbage leaves. The sauce is similar to borscht." Aside from being a better-than-average cook, Andy is busy these days with many different projects, including his newspaper, movies, television and painting. "Now, I just do portraits and flowers. I suppose because nobody really thought I knew how to draw! Some people still think of me in terms of soup cans. And they still hate it. I'm trying to make up for it now by painting flowers."

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HOLIDAYS

Andy Warhol's Ghoulish Goulash (Stuffed Cabbage)

Serves 6

2 medium heads red cabbage
boiling salted water
½ lb. lean ground beef
2 cups cooked rice
1 egg, beaten
2 tbsps. parsley, chopped
2 tbsps. fresh lemon juice
1 tsp. salt
freshly ground black pepper to taste
½ tsp. ground ginger or ¼ tsp. ginger root, finely grated
4 tbsps. butter
½ cup beef broth
2 cups ripe, fresh tomatoes, peeled

1. *Remove core from cabbages. Separate six of the largest leaves from each head by holding cabbage under running water to loosen leaves.*
2. *Plunge leaves in boiling salted water. Cover and cook 3 minutes, or until leaves are wilted.*
3. *Mix together beef, rice, egg, parsley, lemon juice, salt, pepper and ginger.*
4. *Place about 2-3 tbsps. meat-rice mixture in center of each leaf. Fold in corners to form rectangle; roll up and secure with toothpicks or string. Repeat, filling all the leaves.*
5. *Cook stuffed cabbage in butter until browned on all sides.*
6. *Place cabbage rolls in casserole.*
7. *Stir broth and tomatoes into pan drippings; bring to boil. Pour over cabbage rolls.*
8. *Cover and bake in preheated 350° F. oven 1 hour. Serve at once.*

NOTE: For a "goulash" effect, add sour cream to pan drippings and season to taste. Or, for "redder" effect, use tomato sauce! Use remaining cabbage in slaw. If desired, more meat may be used.

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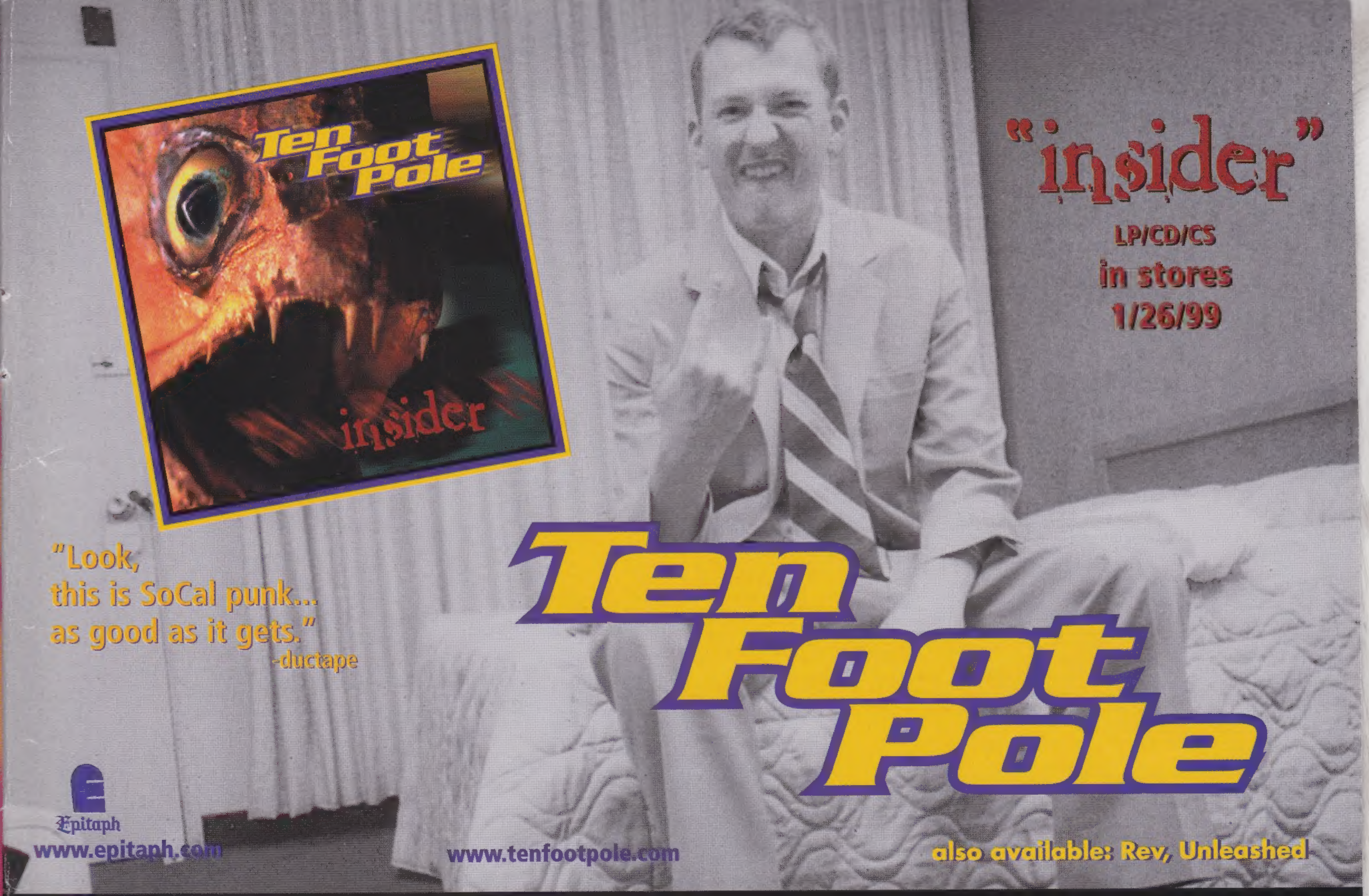
from The Celebrity Cookbook (probably 1970s) by Johna Blinn

Farewell

Twenty-five weeks and ten years ago today, hot summer day in a roach infested Hollywood apartment… Oh no please, skip the narcissistic history. One decade and a lot of things have happened, but I've indulged so much I will subject you to the barest minimum. Still I must at least make efforts to thank all those people who've contributed over the years and made this possibility a reality. There actually was a sort of *Ben Is Dead* "staff", and these were very tortured souls indeed. Want to mention first the main girls who worked in the office on a regular basis for a period, starting with Mikki, for helping me think, organize, and at least consider proofreading. Then Kerin, oy where to begin – I can't, but she certainly suffered, and enjoyed the highlights of this endeavor more than any other person. Moving on to Jessy, the first who was officially (deservedly) paid for the pain and privilege – continuing what would be a long line of Long Beach contributions. Then Skylaire for a brief but important period, adding her weird warrior elfin magik and saving the magazine from being stolen with her good timing and personal power. And finally Lorraine (who still doesn't have her lavender BID shirt she ordered – the reason she originally contacted us, to complain dontcha know. Well, that was a few years long time past, poor dear…), who livened up the office with her fruity dress and brazen disposition. And now for the rest: Selina, for letting me force her to embarrass herself – or that's what she usually thought I was doing (while unbenounst to her she was becoming a good writer). Dad, for only saying "get a real job" in the last few years; helping me, um, do my taxes; not reading the too-dirty stuff. I'd like to thank Alan Anderson for feeding me, those times I was …uh…very UP and wouldn't leave the computer for 20 hours at a time; feeding and reminding me to go to the bathroom – and a couple things about maturity. And Tom Grimley, the best (& worst) reason I'd ever had to skip work, unwittingly mutilating my life for good. Paul Ianonne, Scorpion death & rebirth. Bruce Wagner, Nina Blake, Tracey Kramer, Amy Wallace & many others who helped from there. Aaron Elliot & Lisa Carver, for making zines that lifted my spirits to better words. Paul Simms (the only reason we lasted this far), Bob Mack (ditto), Martin Sprouse, forever. Sharon Ebling (talk about unfettered giving), Brian Doherty, Patty Powers, Howard Hallis, Bruce Eliott, Ethan & Annabelle Port, Carla Bozulich, Cliff Thurber, Evan Mack, Ivy Shields, Dave Gomez, the O.G. Long Beach kids, Al Flipside, Tim Yo., Don Bolles, Mike Vague, Rev. Al Ridenhour, Chip Rowe, Lisa AA, Don Lewis, Karrin Vanderwahl, Karen Eng (wish she was around from the beginning), Noël Tolentino, Seth Robson, Steve Martin (& all the Naughty Lil' Monkeys), Stymie Baldwin, Jhonen Vasquez, Rikki Tavicat, Ron Turner & all at Last Gasp, Stephanie Meurer, Evan Cohen, Christian Cotterman, Dr. Katz, Eric Reynolds, Brad Bohonus, Nancy Nathan, Leyna Marika P., Jerry (S.O.S. Computers), Jawbreaker, Chokebore, Jon Lewis, Jon Regardie, Jon Salinger, Jory Felice, Kitty Beat, Keith Cornel, Doug Biggart, Ken Oatman & family, Kiki, Larry Harmon, Von, Wendy Bryan, Laurel Sterns, Lisa McElroy, Lisa Roth, Freddy @ *Dragazine*, Gary & Michael @ Wizard, Kevin & Sunny *(ChinMusic* & *Girlyhead)*, Marcelle *(Bust)*, Jen Garber, Marc Geiger, Steve Rogers, the Golden Apple family, Gree, Vaginal Davis, Gwynne Kahn, Bruce Pavitt & Jonathan Poneman (Sub Pop), Jocko Weyland, James Masente, all @ Rhino Records (store), Stuart & Dan @ Koma / Amok, *Factsheet Five*, John Karr, Jeff Fox, Jeff Grimes, Jen Dalton, Jennifer & Brian Brannon, Jessica Hundley, Ayala Ben-Yehuda, Katy Krassner, Duran Duran, Michele Dodd-Gilley, Stan Fairbanks, Jim Blanchard, Joel Amsterdam, John Eder, Marc Levinthal, Michael Shephard, Mark Adley, Jim Riva, Mark Ehrman, Mark Fletcher, Matt Tyranour, Michael Simmons, Michael Kaplin, Michelle Anderson, Mike Snieder, Minka, Morgan & Ferris, Pleasant Gehman, Randal Tin-Ear, Renee French, Rich Polysorbate 80°, Johnny Anus, Riley Moore, Rob Mandel, Ron Athey, Ron Dulin, Sandy & Kurt Booker, Scott Feemster, Scott Urlich, Steve Gregoropolus, Steve Mormarco, Estephany Fidel, Shirley Kurata, Epscott Fitzgerald, Steve Payne, Wes, Jack Marquette, Lance Hahn, Sheryl, Omaha, Lee Geerdes, Daphne & Craig (Raunch Records), Tony Lestat, Marcel DeJure, Jon Von, Eric (Hollywood Book & Poster), Vox, Brad Bohonus, Jeff Purcell, Tomás Palermo, Slug, Helen (Retail Slut), Jula Bell, Mia, Danny Dow, Dominique Rip, Kalynn Campbell, Mike Snider, KXLU, BeBop, Lectisternium, X=Art, Greg Lloyd & the Scrödinger Institute, Rush Riddle, Dorin Ragnarok, Bob Lee, Fran, Cecilia, Bernard Yin, Kim O'Donnel, Chris Avis, Jory Feliz, Dani Tull, Kevin @ Essential Media, Phillip & all @ Interset, Peter, Johnny, Tony @ China Times, and everyone else who decided to give me/this magazine a moment of their time…including advertisers who were so patient and understanding, publicists who when weren't annoying were ever-so-helpful, distributors who actually sold the magazine (and then actually paid us!), anyone we might have forgotten (forgive us), and most importantly YOU. Can you imagine, I almost forgot to thank Ben.

Ciao,
xo -d



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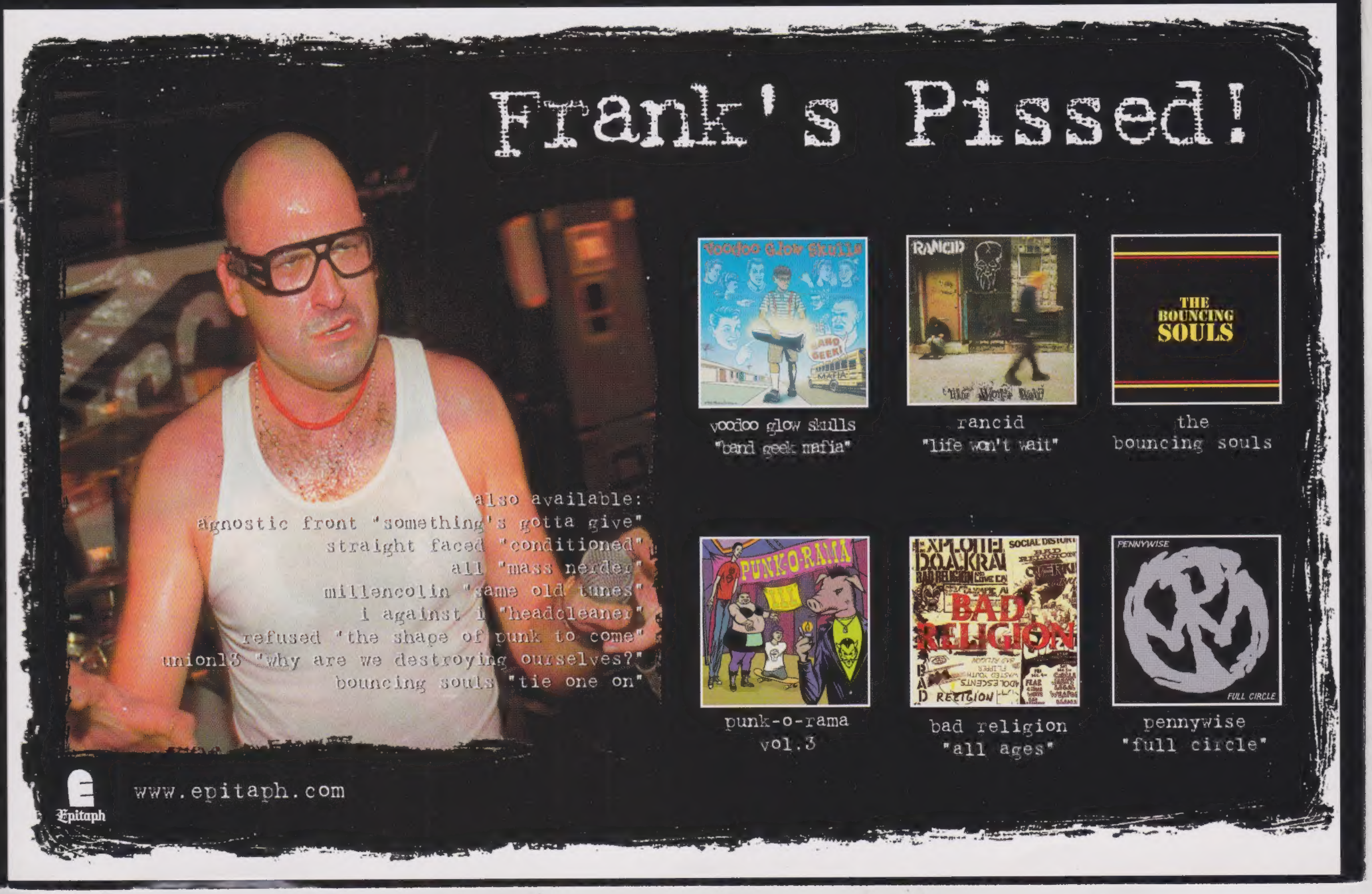

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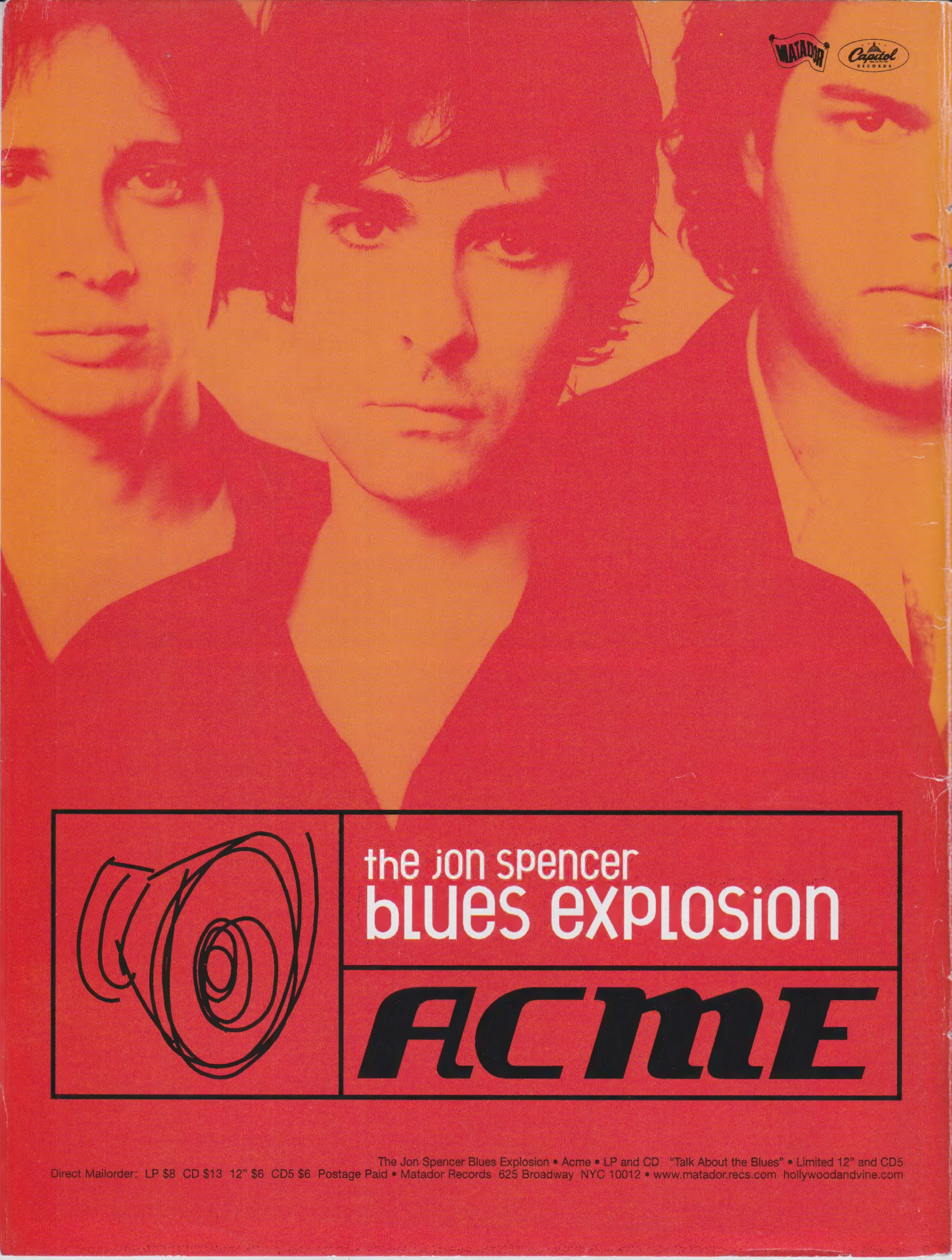

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